

# **T H E   M I D L A N D**

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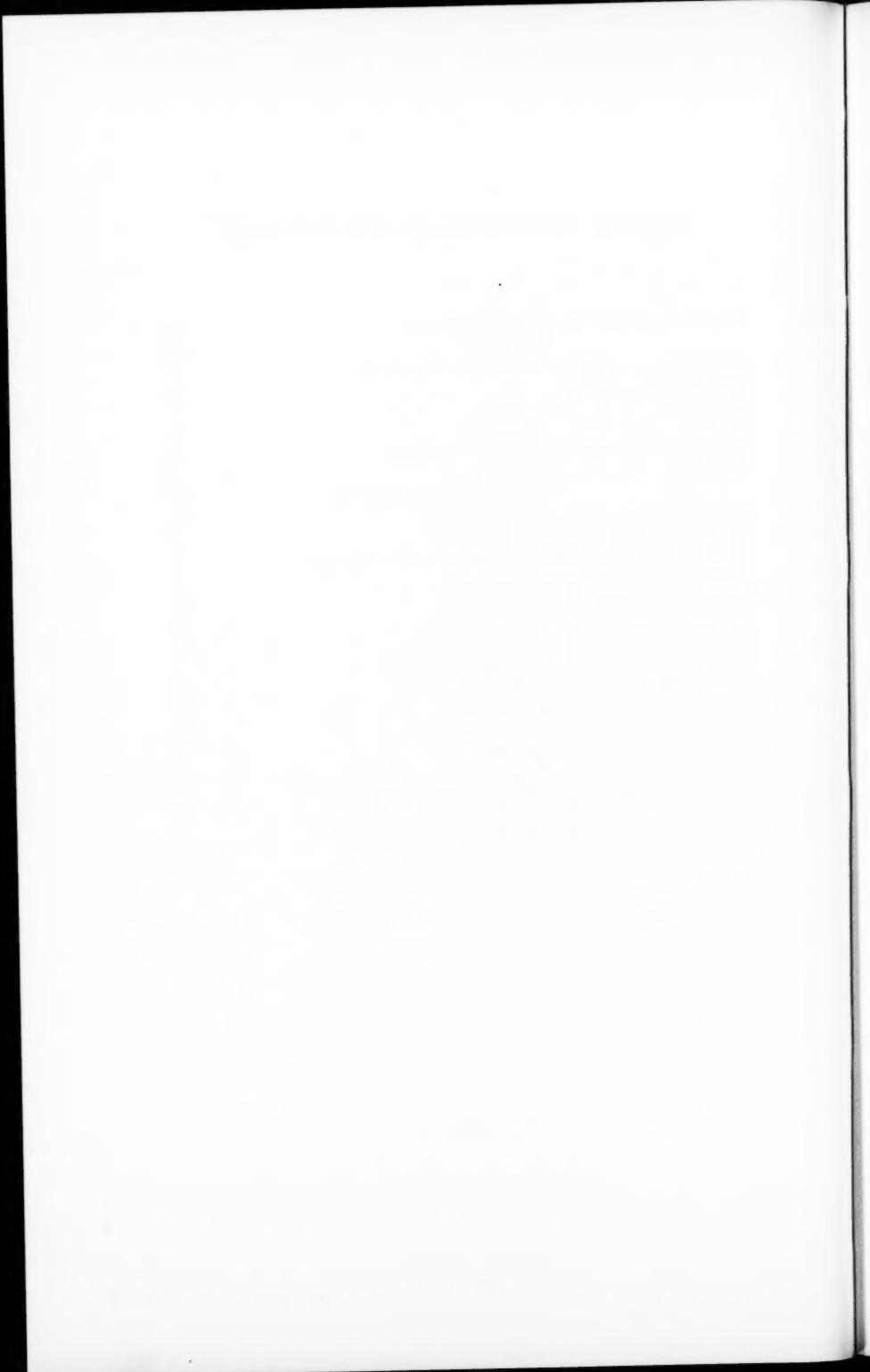
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# THE MIDLAND

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No. 1

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## WHAT BABBITT THINKS OF SINCLAIR LEWIS

I am George F. Babbitt.

Of course I have read the book this man Lewis wrote about me and I have been quite a bit interested in all the discussion in the papers about whether he deserved this big Norwegian prize that he got or not.

I didn't read the one he wrote called *Main Street*. I guess there is something in it pretty lively, anyway my wife said she didn't think it was a book I would appreciate and I took her to mean that, and I intended to get it and read it, but I was pretty busy at the time and just let it go. I didn't use to read books so much anyway, but the last few years I have been reading quite a little. When the stories came out in the newspapers about Lewis getting the prize and about this book *Babbitt*, I wondered right away what a book would be like that was about a man that had the same name as I did, especially when I read in the Sunday paper it was about a business man, so I stopped in the Book Nook before lunch the next Monday and asked for it. I was kind of interested in the girl who was working in the book store anyway and I had thought I might ask her to tell me about the book, whether it was good or not. But she looked so funny when I asked for it that I didn't say anything, just paid for it and walked out. I read it at the office and I never did let my wife know that I read it and she never said anything about it either.

He got quite a few things right about me. Sometimes when I was reading it I would get sore because it seemed

like he must have been writing just about me personally but then I would come to something that proved that he wasn't. At that though he certainly hit quite a few things about right.

I didn't have so easy a start as he says in the book. I was born in Iowa and went to a small college for two years. Then my father got an infection on his foot and I stayed out to work in the bank, he was president of the bank in our town, and after he got better I just went on working in the bank. I got to going with Grace Hazard, she is my wife now, she had graduated at the same college I went to and taught one year. We were married after we went together about four months. She seemed like a wonderful girl at that time, but later on I found out some things about her, about the year she had been teaching in the eastern part of the state, that didn't make me so happy. Pretty soon after we were married we moved to Zenith and I went into the real estate business. I did pretty well and then I was lucky enough to get out of real estate and into autos at about the right time so I went right on making quite a bit of money. Lewis didn't tell about my going into autos.

It is true I have gone in strong for the Booster clubs like Lewis tells. I really fell for all the service stuff for a while just like most everybody fell for making the world safe for democracy and the fourteen points. But after a while you kind of forget about the service stuff even if you go on talking about it, and I really like the fellows in the clubs. There's Dunk Moody for instance. He is an awfully poor poker player and that is why his restaurant is in debt most of the time but he is a real fellow and you could know him a long time and never know he was wounded in the war and has lost two little boys. I like Dunk and I would rather drop in at his restaurant and have him come and sit down and talk with me while I eat my supper than most anything I can think of.

Then there's Hootch Gibson. He's the Congo preacher but we call him Hootch partly because of the fellow in the

movies and partly because he isn't so hot on prohibition as some of the other preachers in town and a while back they tried to make trouble for him over it. He is a good talker and he always has some new stories that a fellow could tell anywhere and yet they are funny, and he has a lot of good sense too. It doesn't seem to hurt him any being a preacher. So Lewis really kind of missed it about the Booster clubs. It is because of the fellows I really like that I keep on going to them.

Some things Lewis got into the book make it look like he really didn't know me very well, at that. I never had a friend like this Paul and I kind of think Lewis put him in just to make more of a story of it. And I never heard of a woman with a name like Tanis Judique and I wouldn't have fallen for her if I had, I would have been suspicious on account of the name.

On the other hand, there are some things about me that he didn't get into the book at all. There was one woman I made a fool of myself about for a while but she moved away. Then there have been two or three other girls I have thought a lot of at different times and in different ways, and I guess he wouldn't quite have understood how I felt about one of them at least. Then there was a high school teacher that I had that I guess I might have married only it never occurred to me at the time that she would have looked at me that way at all. She was a university girl and awfully smart and lively and she told me I had a good mind. That was why I went to college. She only stayed in the town one year. She was small and kind of dark but she had blue eyes. There is nothing about her in the book.

I have two stories that I wrote in an old suitcase in the attic at home. I wrote them in my freshman year at college. There's a lot of other stuff, notebooks and such, from college in that suitcase too. I keep it locked and I have the key here at my office. I think sometimes I would like to study story writing but I guess it is no use. I kept a clipping of some eastern school that offered to teach it in twenty les-

sons here in my desk for quite a while but I finally decided they were probably a fake.

I worry a lot about my kids. That's another point Lewis didn't get quite right about me. My girl is a couple of years younger than my boy, instead of older. I leave the girl to her mother, but the boy and I ought to be able to get closer together. I don't know if my wife has told him about the trouble we have had or not. Sometimes I think she must have and that has prejudiced him against me. When I go with him to a college basketball game or something, he's always with the other kids at a high school game of course, it seems like we get kind of close together and on the way home I feel all soft and proud inside. But then I always go and pull some boner and spoil it all. I don't know whether he kind of sees through me and understands how I really feel or if he just gets sort of fed up on being around with me, and I don't suppose I ever can find out. My own dad is dead now. Maybe if he was alive he could tell me, but I don't know as I would know how to ask him.

On account of his death my uncle has the bank now, and his stepson. I often think I would be better off back there but I guess not. Business is slow though. Of course I thought I had to own a few stocks, and I got pretty well cleaned out last year. I've still got the Buick agency but there's darn few people willing to spend enough money to buy a Buick right now. The house shows it needs paint since the leaves went off.

I often think about what it would be like to be dead. And I wonder if it would really matter to anybody if I died one of these days, I've got quite a bit of insurance. Or what I've done that counts for very much. Or what I'm going to do that amounts to anything. That's the worst. I sometimes wonder what I would be now if I had married that high school English teacher, and had picked a real hard row to hoe instead of what looked like an easy one.

Of course I've helped to build up Zenith. I really think that is something worth while, though I admit the town

doesn't look very good right now with all the factories shut down. But I think sure things will open up again in the spring.

I think it was all right for this man Lewis to get the prize. His book *Arrowsmith* I didn't think was quite fair to the doctors, not as I know them. They have to make a living the same as the rest of us. But it is sure a good story. I have often wondered what it would be like to be married to a woman like Luella. I didn't think his book *Elmer Gantry* was quite fair to the preachers either. There aren't many of them as bad as that Gantry. Still that was a good story too. As I said before, I never read *Main Street* and I haven't read any of his other ones except *Babbitt*.

I understand that is the one he got the prize for, the one about me. Well, as I said before, there is quite a bit of truth in it, although I think he sort of missed the point about the Booster clubs, and there are some things about me that he didn't know or else he didn't put them in. I don't hardly see why it was a book to give a prize about, but at that I'd rather see an American get a prize for writing about American business men than for writing about old South American ruins and old Greek women like another fellow did. I forgot his name but I tried to read that book of his that I mentioned last, about the old Greek woman, and I thought it was a lot of hooey. And it was the poorest two dollars worth I ever did buy, only a few pages and great big type like a primer, and wherever there was any excuse for a blank page they put two in.

Well, I think this man Sinclair Lewis wrote about America, and American business men like me, because he is a good deal like us himself, and I think he feels a good deal like I do about quite a lot of things. I have read his speech accepting that big prize, and looked at his picture in the papers, and I don't believe he is such a very happy man himself.

## FOUR POEMS

By G. J. NEUMANN

### *"VITA BREVIS"?*

A lonely birch,  
Wings blown away,  
Is a woman who has lived  
Too long by a day.

A birch whose wings  
In an autumn blow  
Fell and lie under  
The fallen snow.

Cold is the sun  
And spiked the star,  
And the little robins  
Are winged and far.

## SAFE

I knew a spring  
Of beauty — a star,  
Love, and a flower—  
Oh, far, far!

Love lies still  
In a stony yard,  
And men have trodden  
The woodside hard.

Only the star  
Is hung so high  
None can pluck it  
Out of the sky.

## APRIL

I dreamt last night that a robin came  
Crying to my window  
And fluttered his wings against the pane—  
“Let me in — do !”

And I woke and looked out : the wind was blowing  
Black limbs and snowing.  
I raised the window a robin’s head  
And crept into bed.

## O BROTHER —

Tell thy tale  
And sing thy song,  
And find thy pillow,  
And sleep thou long.

And well be thy waking  
After the night  
To follow the White Wings  
Up the light,

Where tales were told  
And songs were sung  
Ere ever the bridge  
Of heaven was hung, —

The bridge whereverver  
The moon and stars  
Lift their lances  
In Time’s wars.

## A GOOD BOY

By HAROLD CROGHAN

"You want anything else, Bud?"

"Nope." Bud lighted a cigarette and got up from the table. "I guess not." He went through the living room into the bedroom. Charley followed him and closed the door.

It was hot in the bedroom. Bud sat on the bed.

"Bud, what am I going to do?"

"What for crissake did you hit him with? They say he's going to die."

Charley went to the window. He didn't want Bud to see his face. He wasn't crying, but his mouth was jerking. He squeezed his hands together. What was going to happen to him? Bud sat on the bed and smoked. "Give me a cigarette, Bud." Charley kept his face averted.

"What you hit him with?"

"I don't want to talk about it. You sure O'Donnell knows I done it?"

"He saw you, didn't he? He ain't saying anything to anybody yet. I talked to him. You're scared, ain't you, kid?"

"I don't want the bastard to die. I don't want to be a murderer."

"Well, I got some money. You may need it. You better stick inside tonight. What you hit him with, Charley?"

"Lay off, will you, Bud? I'm not going to talk about it."

Charley walked out into the living room. He walked a bit stooped. He was too tall for his age. But his face and head were beautiful. He pushed up the screen and threw the cigarette into the street. Ma didn't know he smoked. Ma was proud of him.

He kept thinking about yesterday. He kept thinking about how it happened. He wasn't a tough kid.

Yesterday he had got into the last period class late. Old man Duke said, "Report to the discipline room tonight. You're going to get three days."

That was how he happened to be sent up to the discipline

room at two-thirty. There was a room full of hard luck guys there and a teacher the boys called Warts—Warts Harrigan. Benny Schy was there. He was always in the discipline room.

That was how he came to run into Benny Schy. Thirteen was when the discipline bunch was dismissed. Charley came downstairs with Benny. They came out on Central Avenue.

Benny said, "I know where there's a crap game up this alley. Let's see, maybe I can win us both a sundae."

They went up the alley underneath the elevated structure. The pavement was broken. There were heaps of ashes lying about. About a block north of the school they found the crap game, five boys squatted in a half circle. They were throwing the dice against the board fence. The elevated trains were going over almost continually. It was beginning the busy time of the afternoon. Charley knew only one of the five boys. He was a Greek boy who used to sell papers in front of the Chicago Avenue "L" station. He was nicknamed Koke. The fellow who had the dice was the oldest looking of the five. He was sort of well dressed. Well, he had the dice.

He said, "Hi, Benny. Who's your friend?"

"He's a right guy. Salvatto, meet Ed Omenski."

"Salvatto? I know a girl by the name Lizzie Salvatto."

"That's my sister."

How did Lizzie come to know this slicker? She ought to be careful.

Charley watched the crap game. They were shooting nickels. Omenski lost the dice and passed them to Charley. Charley shook his head.

"What's the matter, Punk?"

"I don't want to shoot."

Benny said, "What the hell. He don't want to shoot. Let him alone."

"All right, Punk. You don't act like your sister. She's a damn fast little broad."

"You're a liar, Polack. I bet you don't know my sister." He didn't feel so mad when he said that. It was just something a fellow had to say. He couldn't let the Polack crack wise about Lizzie.

"Listen, Punk." He kept calling him Punk. "I said I knew your sister. I know all about your sister, see?"

Charley thought to himself, I am going to have a fight. Omenski was on his feet. All the boys were on their feet. He cracked Omenski. But it didn't hurt him. Omenski was a good scrapper. Charley thought, I can't hit hard. If Bud ever pasted this guy he would be out.

Charley didn't have a chance. He took a lot of punishment. He got to fighting kind of crazy, swinging his arms about leaving himself wide open. He got to feeling kind of crazy too. He kept his eyes on Omenski's face thinking, I'm going to get you, Omenski. That was all there was in his mind. Omenski hit him on the end of the nose. That hurt. It hurt so he began to cry. All right, Omenski, I'm going to kill you. That's what he said. He didn't know for sure whether he said it aloud. Omenski hit him again. Charley backed up and fell in a sitting position.

The Greek they called Koke said, "There's a cop up there by the station."

Omenski looked down at Charley. Omenski was breathing hard. And grinning. Charley sat groping with his hands upon the broken pavement. His right hand closed upon a lump of cement. That was what he wanted. He wanted a weapon. All right, Omenski, I'm going to kill you. Charley got to his feet. He was dizzy. He had the lump of cement in his right hand. He remembered squeezing down on its sharp edges. It felt heavy.

"Cut it, you guys. It's O'Donnell." Benny ran up the alley a little way and turned in behind a store. Koke followed him. The other fellows ran off dodging behind the steel supports of the elevated. O'Donnell was coming. They knew O'Donnell. He didn't take kids to the station. He would rather catch a kid and kick hell out of him.

Omenski looked away from Charley. Just for a second. A second was enough time. Charley hit him with the lump of cement. He hit him terribly hard. Omenski ran sideways and bumped against a steel pillar and fell over on his face. Charley ran with his legs buckling under him. O'Donnell yelled, "Hey you, what the hell you doing?" Charley climbed the board fence and went through an alley to Clark Street. He went into a pool hall on Clark Street and went into the lavatory and slopped cold water on his nose.

He didn't think Omenski was hurt so bad. He just thought, I sure smashed him. I guess I was kind of crazy. He had it coming. But then there was a story in the evening paper. About O'Donnell finding Omenski under the elevated. Omenski was not going to live. That's what it said.

That's what it said. Charley put his face against the screen. It must be about eight o'clock. The nigger kid, Jed, was calling a last edition. He yelled, "Wup! Paper-yuh!" A Halsted car bounced over the switch at the corner.

Bud came out of the bedroom wearing his new gray suit. He said, "So long, kid."

Yes, it must be about eight o'clock. Charley fidgeted about. He had the funny feeling in his stomach. A feeling like his belt was pulled up too tight. Not exactly like that. But something like that. Everything might come out all right. If nothing happened tonight that would be two days. Maybe Omenski was going to be all right.

Lizzie came in from the kitchen. She had brown eyes, awfully pretty brown eyes, with eyelashes that curled up. She had the prettiest, roundest legs. "Hello. You with the red nose." Charley grinned at her. Lizzie had everything. Gee, she was a good looking girl. "What you been doing, leaning against the screen? You got the marks on your forehead."

"Liz, don't bother Charley. He said he was going to stay in and study."

"Aw, never mind, ma. Charley, I want to show you a dance step."

"I don't feel like it, Liz."

She put her arm around his waist. They danced on the rug. Gee, she was a cute kid. "I don't feel like it, Liz." He went back to the window.

"What's on your mind, Charley?"

"Nothing."

"You been moping around. I wish I had a date tonight. Did anybody call and ask for me today, do you know?"

"No, I don't know."

"There is somebody coming up the stairs." Lizzie ran through the dining room jerking at her apron. "If they want me I'll be right out."

Charley whirled around. He jerked up the screen. It wasn't very far to the sidewalk. Not very far.

"Lizzie, there's somebody at the door. Where she gone to?" Ma came out of the kitchen wiping her face with her apron. "You're going to fall out of the window, Charley."

She opened the door. "What do you want?"

"Mrs. Salvatto?"

"Yes. What do you want?"

"Is Charley in?"

"What you want with Charley?" Charley closed the screen. His hands were shaking. He was shaking all over. He went into the bedroom and got his cap.

He stood beside his mother at the door. This was O'Donnell. He looked hard. But he had the reputation of not arresting kids. Not unless he had to. His face was red and smooth. There was sweat on his chin. "Hello, Charley."

"You and Charley are friends, I bet?" Ma's voice was shrill. She was picking at her apron.

"Sure."

Charley went down the street ahead of O'Donnell. "Did he die?"

"Yeh, he died."

## A NIGHT AT SLIGO'S

By A. E. FISHER

This is the story of Sadie, and of how she forgot. Sadie was a waitress in Burke and Sligo's Bon Ton Chop House, and a very good waitress, too. But that night (all this happened over one hundred years ago, in London) — that night she was tired; her legs had a faint ache in them, because of too much dancing the evening before, and her eyes smarted a little, for she had not slept long into the morning.

"Two dishes of veal," she said to herself, "and her in the black shiny gown with them bits o' speckled lace wants more butter, and the nob over at the far end has to have a cup of broth, and toast good and piping, and that lamp needs oil, and there's that nasty boy making another spot on the cloth! His eggs, I guess. Have to cover it — what?"

"Sadie! S't! Where'd you put the wine card?" The cash girl was plucking at her sleeve.

"Oh, over on the third table — no, the little one — that's it!"

Pushing the door open with her hip and shoulder, she passed through into the kitchen and gave her order to the cook, standing regal before his stove with splendid disregard for everything in the world but eggs, and the proper flip-flop of the hand to turn them.

"Two veals and a small broth!" Sadie screamed into the thick warm vapor which hung over everything, whereupon Joe, the cook's helper, wiped his big hands, glistening with butter, and took up his knife.

"Two of 'em? Two?"

"And a small broth. Please."

While she waited Sadie kept her gaze fixed on the little round pane in the door, through which she could see if any new people came in. Joe hummed a tune hideously somewhere far up in the cavities of his big purple nose, while he sliced veal and looked at Sadie's back (she knew this — she

could feel his hog-eyes there). "Mmmm-hmmm, mmmm-hmmm," was the sound made by Joe as his glance flickered over Sadie.

"O lud, there's six come in . . . seven! Pish! Here, Joey!" and she took the veal, some broth, some butter, some toast, and hurried into the dining room with them.

"Six, and one's seven . . . Lud, ain't he the *swell*!" A big man in buckskin breeches and a mighty coat of bottle green, erupting at the top into magnificent frilly foam which was a cravat, and bursting at the bottom into purple striped splendor which was a velvet waistcoat, was seating five big women, quite lost in fluffs and laces, at the big table in the centre of the room. And at once all the other diners seemed blotted out by this multiple gleaming splendor; every one grew smaller, began to turn grey, though some, perhaps, retained a slight green tinge.

"My top hat!" said this fine fellow, giving it to Sadie as though conferring the Order of St. George upon her.

She took it with great care; she bore it in both hands to the best rack in the room; she did not see anybody; she did not see anybody at all.

Certainly, with the rich splendor of these people weighing upon her, she could not have been expected to notice the small young man who was drawing up a chair at a small table in the farthest corner.

Still dazed, Sadie brought the lady in shiny black her extra butter, and she hurriedly served the nobby toff his broth and piping toast, and she poured out more milk for the nasty boy, wearing a simper as she did so, for his mother seemed to expect that all people should simper at her swollen son . . . then the two veals, and then, at last, water for the splendid six.

How tired she was! Waiting for these mighty people to tell what they should have, she dared forget them for a moment, and to think of Arthur. Arthur's moist hand, Arthur's arm tight around her waist, supporting her . . . Arthur asking for one dance after another, and riding home

at last with her in a hackney coach, even though it cost two bob. She thought her frock had looked very nice; the bit of pink gauze and the flounce caught up gave it a stylish touch. . . . "Your order, please, sir?"

The big man was certainly *somebody*. Sadie forgot about Arthur's arm, his laughing, what he said as they passed the gate, even his kiss, as she looked down again at the big man and saw the soft light shine on his smooth head, causing all its hairless expanse to glisten; she gazed at the excellent eruption of his cravat, marked the fineness of the cloth in his bottle-green coat, peered in covert wonder at his mighty buckskin breeches. He had a rusty sort of voice. He said, "You had better brring us this," and "You had better brring us that," in a way that would indicate to any waitress who ever lived, and to all diners who cared to listen, and especially to each of his big, mum, but very fine women, that he was somebody indeed. "You can brring us the calf's liver," he told Sadie, and all the five big women looked out at her from the caverns of their hats as he said it, and she could see in their eyes that they all liked calf's liver very much. "And tea. And turnip. *And biscuits, eh?*" The five agreed that there should of course be biscuits.

Sadie brought them knives and forks, the best ones, and then, suddenly noticing the small man in the corner, she went to his table and asked him what he would have, please?

He sat with his chin resting upon one hand, huddled a little forward in his chair, looking down moodily at the cloth. Quite an ordinary young man, in quite ordinary clothes. Still, she gave him water just the same. Arthur's kiss, Arthur's kiss, and her quick sharp breath when she saw that he was going to at last (she had the feel of that aching breath still in her chest) . . . the guttering street lamp at her corner where the coach turned and swayed, and the crazy shadows rushing on ahead . . . then the tiny dry squeak of Arthur's new boots as they went up the walk, and Arthur's arm holding her . . . tired, tired . . . oh, life is awful, but there's fun in it a little of the while. . . .

"Your order?"

He wanted only scones and tea.

Sadie hurried into the steamy bright kitchen, another world, shut out by the swinging door; another world, where smoky lamps, giving off an odor of burnt oil, shone down on Food, on sweating people whose business was Food, and whose life was all Food too. They shone most particularly, of course, upon Jean the cook, because he was the largest. Jean was a living tribute to Food, and what could be done with it. Jean lived with Food, by Food, for Food, and worshipped it humbly as his God. Not for Jehovah, or Jehovah's son (who, he was told on good authority, had died for him) did Jean feel as much reverence as for a good, reeking roast, or for pink tongues wrenched out of oxen's maws. Food, Food, Food. For Joe too, Food was a fearsome and a marvelous commodity, although he had eyes for a shapely hip, or a creamy throat, like Sadie's. Beef, veal, pork, lamb, ham and coddled eggs; steam, steam, steam and copper kettles, and spidery cracks in the ceiling, and Sadie's tired, tired legs and her smarting eyes . . . and heat, and melted butter, and smoking grease, and slimy pots and pans heaped up waiting in the noisome sink for Joe to rattle them about and make them clean . . .

"Six calfs, please, Joe," said Sadie. "And are there any more biscuits in the top tray?"

"Hmm, hmmm, hmfffff, hees jolee baw, yes, yes, yes," Joe said. "Six calfs, cook eh? Here, here's you deesh for biscuits." Joe had a voice good enough for a church. "And she say I muryyoo, my jollee baw," chanted he. "One calfs. Let me 'ave it. I will take off the drop with my apron. S's's't! Two calfs."

"Hurry up, you, Joe! They're very important people out there want that calf's liver!"

"What? You tell me?" cried Joe, dropping his knife and glaring. Sadie had violated the etiquette of the kitchen. "Tell *me* hurry, eh? Hoo! I can get better job than this damn job." He spat into a convenient bucket. "Tell ME hurry!"

"Rot, Joey dear, don't mind it — I wasn't in my bed till three this morning."

"Ah? What you doing before you go to bed that time, eh? I ask before, not after. I do not want I should ask of you, what it is you do *after* you go to bed, hah, hah, hah, no, poof! No, no. You go to the dance weeth that feller, eh?"

"Well, what if I did? Here you are. Put 'em on the tray, will you, Joey? You're a wag, an't you, Joey? You'd like to know, wouldn't you?"

"Six calfs!"

Sadie swept out with the calf's liver and the biscuits, swinging her hips a little. "H'mff! That greasy Joe! Anybody's think he thought he was a dream the way he eyes you!"

Back into the world of men and women waiting for their calf's liver, and their biscuits, and their tea — the big man rustily talking, and one of the women, perhaps his wife, answering loudly yes and no in such a cultivated voice — Lord! It made you feel how little you knew after all to hear 'em go on like that. Serving them, she was extra careful not to brush their elbows, especially those splendid ones in tight bottle-green. The big man was tucking his napkin into his waistcoat and making little noises with his lips. He liked calf's liver very much too, you could see that. Sadie asked him respectfully (just as he finished chewing a rather large piece of liver and was swallowing it . . . she knew how to time it, she did) if everything was to his taste, and if there was anything more now? To which, having swallowed, the magnificent fellow answered that everything was perfectly satisfactory, perfectly, and smiled upon her very benignantly indeed. Sadie liked that — she liked to have nice, important, kind old gentlemen smile at her — it made her feel young, and foolish, and it made her conscious of the rare, fresh sweetness that she knew was hers. Young, foolish, sweet, and tired . . . not much fun in this serving business. If Arthur could only get a place that paid a lot, and married her soon! As she tripped out she whispered it

in time to her quick steps: "Soon, soon, soon! O soon, Arthur, soon!"

The kitchen again, and pots and pans, and a kettle full of cabbage on the stove, and Jean busy again over more Food, and Joe looking with hog-eyes at the swelling curves of her breasts where the tight-laced bodice revealed them — pity he couldn't find enough to look at in the dirty corner he was supposed to wash his kettles in!

Lud, more people! Two old ladies. Oh, yes, Mrs. Crammer and her sister from the country, going toward the table under the arch, where Mrs. Crammer always sat. Mrs. Crammer would want crumpets and jam, and a pot of tea, very hot and strong; but her sister (what a tight old body she was, and how she held her chin up!) — there was no telling what she'd want.

Sadie hurried out, pink from the kitchen's vaporous heat, her heels clicking sharply on the floor, her fresh, eager, shy smile ready for them. They liked her. Oh, she knew that! It warmed their old eyes up when they looked at her, and made them remember how they had enjoyed life when they were young and sweet and foolish. But she felt a terrific yawn coming just as she opened her mouth to speak a bright "Good evening, Mrs. Crammer, and you too, mam," and in order to check it she had to press her lips together very tight. The yawn surged, was smothered, died, the water came into her eyes, and it was safe to speak. "Good evening, Mrs. Crammer, and you too, mam."

"Ah, good evening to you, child, and we'll be having our tea and crumpets and a bit o' the plum if so be as you have any tonight still," said Mrs. Crammer in her high squeaky old voice.

"Oh, yes, mam, certainly, I'll . . . is it strong tea you wanted?"

"Ah yes."

"Oh, and the cakes buttered?"

"Ah yes, the cakes buttered."

So Sadie went to the kitchen again for tea, and a bit o'

the plum, and buttered cakes. Six o'clock. Three hours more, and then she could rest, maybe, if she wasn't too tired, and sleep. She bent down out of sight of Joe to rub her tired legs under her long dimity skirt, and try to get that tingling out of them. Ah well, they could dance, anyway! More than one person, and not the ordinary kind either, had turned to look as she tripped so gracefully in the quadrille, or gave herself to the lascivious embraces of the wicked waltz. Drat it! That tea! Oh, and jam! Plum, was it? M'm, yes, and good, too. Oh! The crumpets weren't all toasted! And tea for six . . . Lord, she'd have to . . .

She opened the door in the same manner as always — funny she never had to think about it — standing sideways, pushing with shoulder and hip, swinging the right heel to catch it, and hastened to bring Mrs. Crammer and her sister their Food. Then back to the kitchen in flight, so that the splendid man and his five fine women might have their tea precisely when their liver was done with.

The cash girl touched her arm as she passed the desk. "S'st! Hey, Sadie! That corner table! Have you . . .?"

"Oh, bother! I forgot all about him! Well, I've got to . . ." She went on into the kitchen; those big six mustn't be kept waiting, anyway.

She returned with their tea, and gave it to them. The bottle-green man wanted more butter, and some very hot water, if she would be so good?

"Surely, surely, sir, directly!"

That was the way to give an order — you could tell *he* had been to places! She fetched the butter and the hot water.

Then at last she brought the lone man his tea. He *was* ordinary looking. His mouth, for instance, was like any other mouth, his hair, too, and his eyes — except that they were very large and clear and steady, so that you wanted to look into them a long while, only of course you couldn't be looking into people's eyes like that all the . . .

"So you forgot me again," he murmured, as she arranged

his dishes. His voice was low; she was not sure of what he had said.

"Pardon . . . did you say —?"

"I was here once before, and you forgot me then, too."

The man smiled at her.

"Oh — I — did I? I'm sorry."

"Pray don't be, the least bit."

Sadie got away from him, a little confused. Well, what if she had? A body couldn't — and anyway, better to keep him waiting than somebody important and rich, like him in bottle green. Smiled at her, too! These young kind always trying that sort of — Oh *drat* it, Mrs. Crammer wanted something else from the way she was looking . . .

Across to Mrs. Crammer with a sharp tapping of heels, and a kind smile ready. "Yes, Mrs. Crammer, mam?"

"Child, I'd like some more jam if you would be so good."

"Oh yes, Mrs. Crammer, I surely will!"

Bother! It was these extra trips back and forth that got you so tired you couldn't climb upstairs to bed when the day was over. Back and forth, back and forth, through the swinging doors into the kitchen, and out again, and back again—Lord, if Arthur only *would* find a good paying place, there wouldn't be any more of this tramping over hard floors with heavy plates weighing on you, and setting them down, and picking them up again when people were through, and tramping with them to the kitchen, so that they could be washed right up and ready for you to carry back, to be dirtied, and picked up, and piled, and lifted, and returned to the kitchen, and washed, and picked up, and piled, and lifted . . . Just that, over and over and over . . . If she had to go on doing it much longer she'd — still, of course if she weren't tired out all the time it wouldn't be so bad. Some days she didn't mind it much. Oh, well, you couldn't have everything. Old Mrs. Crammer could have all the jam she wanted, and be waited on, and smiled at, and helped, and spoken to sweet, but could she dance? Who'd want to ask *her* for the last dance, and then go home with

her, and kiss her? Well, nobody would: not anybody; even cook would have better sense.

"Here's your jam, Mrs. Crammer, mam."

"Thank'ee, thank'ee, dear, very kindly."

Yes, anybody'd be a fool to want to dance with *her*.

The man she had forgotten was drinking his tea, sipping it. She saw him looking at her, and when she passed his table she stopped and asked him if everything was all right.

"Oh, indeed! I am happy now. Only — I shouldn't like to be so easily forgotten."

"I'm sorry. I won't forget you again. Some of the people, I know their names, and that makes it a lot — "

"Then shall I tell you mine?"

"Yes, sir?" Sadie thought it best to be polite to them, and anyway they always found some excuse to talk. Well, if they knew about her and Arthur, and what Arthur had said last night, and if they could once see her dancing with him in her pink gown, maybe they wouldn't be so free . . .

"Yes, sir, and what is your name?"

"It is John Keats," he answered.

"Pardon, sir?" Her moist lips, her whole body, were thrilling at that moment to Arthur's kiss.

"John Keats."

"Yes, sir, thank you." How Arthur's hand had trembled as it rested on her shoulder! She had always wondered if he got gay with other girls she knew nothing of, but after last night she did not think so. No! Arthur was hers, hers, hers . . . and her heels clicked in time to it, jubilant, as she walked back to the kitchen. Hers, hers, hers! Soon, soon, soon!

"What you think about all tonight, eh? My God, you always go round like that, Sadie? Maybe your little boy not like you last night?" Joe was the comedian of the kitchen.

"Oh, go do your dishes!" Sadie muttered wearily. "You think you're a great wag, don't you, Joey? Why don't you tend to your dishes?"

She turned to glance through the little pane. "Oh, drat it! Two more!"

"You go do *your* dishes!" chortled Joe. "You hurry up, will you? Hurry go do your dishes, Sa-dee, hah, hah, hah. Look, look, look, see Sa-dee go quick get some more dishes. Hah, hah, hah."

"Oh, you're funny, ain't you!"

She shoved the door open with a vicious thrust of her elbow. That greasy Joe! He thought he was some fine fellow, he did!

The new people plumped themselves down near the important party, who were now lingering over their biscuits. They looked important and rich, too. She went to them, her smile ready. "Good evening, and what will it be, please?"

"Some liver and cabbage and cake for both of us," said the new man, emphasizing the word "both" very strongly. Married, Sadie guessed. Yes, they were married, you could tell that. But of course it wasn't that way with everybody. When she and Arthur were married there wouldn't be anything like that — they'd go on loving, and loving . . .

On the way to the kitchen she stopped at the table in the corner; for the small man had finished his tea, paid the cash girl, and was now walking in leisurely fashion toward the door.

He stopped just under the lamp for a moment; and its unsteady yellow light rested on his face. Then he went out, slowly.

Why had he told her his name? Queer, that was. Well, you couldn't stop them from talking to you. What was it, now? H'm. John . . . John . . . No, she couldn't remember. Oh well, little things like that didn't matter — if you spent all your life trying to think of things that came up during the day, why, you'd go off your head, you would. And anyway, what was the good? Nothing ever happened, much. Go off your head, sure, remembering everything; especially being tired and sleepy, the way she was. Tired! It would be the death of her, this tramping! Oh, well, a good rest tonight would set her up again. She gathered up the dirty dishes the man had left, and went out with them to the kitchen.

## THE LONELY ONES

By ROBERT GATES

### 1. EVERY MONDAY

On Sunday night John Harper set his clock  
For half-past five, and he was dressed by six  
After his shave. Then taking time to fix  
Coffee and kiss his wife, he could unlock  
And pack his bag and hit the road at seven.  
The empty road and waving golden grain —  
His thoughts passed slowly up across his brain,  
And slow white clouds passed up across his heaven.

. . . I'd better check my tires in this next town,  
And think to have my oil looked at too.  
There's that new line of tinted shirts to show.  
This afternoon I'll call on Hare and Brown.  
I hope by Friday night I can be through,  
But that means long, hot drives, and I don't know . . .

### 2. HOTEL WEDNESDAY

Flat on his back and staring at the light  
Across the court and hearing corridors  
Vibrate with unknown steps and unknown doors  
He saw his world come tumbling down by night.

. . . It's getting late. I must be off my feed  
That I can't sleep. I hope I don't get sick.  
Insurance funds and savings would go quick  
If they were used for everything we need . . .

. . . We're spending every cent I'm making now.  
Buying a house, it's hard to get ahead.  
A couple years should see me cleared away,  
An office job by that time anyhow.  
It'd seem nice to sleep in my own bed,  
And eat at my own table every day . . .

### 3. ALL ALONE THURSDAY

Helen in bed would watch the empty week;  
Housework for one was light and she slept late.  
No children by some physiologic fate,  
But there was Rags and tireless hide-and-seek,  
Then luncheon-bridge or else the vitaphone,  
A lonely table and an empty bed,  
Broken by intervals when Rags played dead,  
And she stared in the dusk and felt alone.

. . . Sprinkling outside; I hope it doesn't storm.  
It's black as pitch. I'll pull the curtains down.  
There's that old noise again! It sounds so near!  
It isn't cold and yet I can't keep warm.  
No one would dare to break in right in town.  
*I can't get scared! Oh, I wish John was here! . . .*

### 4. FINALLY FRIDAY

. . . Seems funny I should be so scared last night,  
But papers tell about such awful things.  
I'll only lie here till my alarm clock rings.  
That can't be long, the sun comes in so bright.  
John will be home, I'm sure, by supper time.  
If berries aren't too high, I ought to make  
What he'd like best for supper — good short-cake.  
There goes the big clock's half-past seven chime . . .

Just four o'clock. I should be home by six,  
Time to clean up and write my orders out.  
Lord, but today has been a scorcher though!  
Helen's expecting me. I hope she'll fix  
That kind of short-cake I'm so wild about.  
I'll bet tonight she'd like to see a show . . .

### 5. AND THE SWEET INTERVAL

Week-ends we see them everywhere we go,  
Saturday evenings somewhere dining out —  
She cool and slim, he hot and moist and stout —  
And later somewhere else to see a show,  
And after that we know they drive around,  
Stopping at midnight by some silent farm,  
She talking quietly against his arm  
And he in happy silence at the sound.

Cool Sunday mornings they get up to play  
Tennis or have a picnic at the lake,  
Or home together they can smile at rain.  
But twilight comes and makes them each more gay,  
Desperately trivial for the other's sake,  
Knowing that sleep brings loneliness again.

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### CONQUEST

By GLENN WARD DRESBACH

No soil shall ever be soft enough  
To make me forget the way my shoulders  
Where set to the plow where the ground was rough  
And wild with hidden boulders.

No matter how rich a field may be  
I cannot forget the rugged field  
That softened to waving gold for me —  
It was something for it to yield!

I remember no other harvest that came  
With such abandon, and not till I die  
Will wild earth leap to golden flame  
So far against the sky.

## STUBBORN THISTLES

By GRACE STONE COATES

The Home was no longer the show place he had visited in the late '90s. By no means, he reflected, what it must have been in the '80s. Then even the New York press had heralded its inception, its progress, its formal opening; and flowered to alliterative eulogy over this "palace of the Pacific, set in a paradise of southern plenty," where soldiers broken in their country's service might suavely end their days.

He had read, laughed his inward laugh, and dubbed the place the Castle of Indolence; asserting that he, too, would sometime join the Lotus Eaters, who in these days plucked their mystic solace from the village counter — a brown aromatic leaf, fine-cut!

His hand twitched in a deprecatory gesture at the memory, and he shifted uneasily in his chair. His children's mother had never entered into the spirit of his mocking humor. She withheld approval, until mirth faded from his derision, and only bitterness remained. His mordant wit made her suffer, and her suffering provoked him to more personal thrusts. During the months when his irony had played around the building of the Home, the subject had come to lie stubbornly between them, an irritant never acknowledged, but always felt.

He had been at grips with fortune in those days, and fortune had flung him to earth. He had risen, and conquered her; and carried like a banner the elation of his victory. His first visit to the Home, years before, had been an incident of that triumph. In the leisure wealth gave him, he had come to its grounds to see their Australian pines, a notable arboretum.

The Araucaria had interested him; the human life of the place had not. His glance had passed indifferently over old men in uniform strolling across the lawn or lolling in the shade, veterans telling their battles over, chewing their vile

tobacco, sucking their insufferable pipes. Gregarious cattle! He had marveled at apathy that could call such negation life, and shrugged his shoulders at these negligible ones willing to circle, circle aimlessly in this backwater of existence. The Castle of Indolence! He had laughed his lean laugh, taken note of his beloved pines, and gone his way.

He withdrew his thoughts from old perplexities that, resolved or not, were part of the past, and of no present moment. Nearer matters pressed him.

For three years he had shared this refuge of the vanquished. But everything imperious in him protested that he had come to the Home not in defeat but in bold aggressiveness. Might not issues arise in which passivity became a triumph of aggression? With his scorn of acknowledged failure, his loathing of institutional regime, was not acquiescence in the necessity that brought him here the final, vigorous stroke toward his set purpose?

Again he stirred restively, his eyes on the rose-bordered pathway beyond the barracks porch, and again recalled the grounds as he had seen them first: wide lawns sweeping up to pretentious buildings, their vivid sward framed by white archways through which visitors were piloted; flower plots glowing in the sunshine; caretakers in blue, busy with hose-carts and sprinklers, plucking each yellowing leaf before it fell. Now the Home had fallen on leaner times. Water had become scarce and precious. After spring rains had coaxed the grass to velvet, and gone their way down roaring arroyos, the sun burned it to brown wisps. Dust of traffic settled greyer and greyer on roses and lantana. All pretense of elegance had been abandoned. The glamour of the place was gone.

The odor of roses, heavy and dusty, drifted past him, stirring to memory a half forgotten phrase . . . *voluptuous roses*. . . . The context of the words eluded him. Meagerly voluptuous, these blossoms before him; sharing the voluptuousness of roses as the angular waitresses in the mess hall shared the voluptuousness of women. He glanced toward the sun, and saw it was past noon. By this time the

dining room might be emptied of its uniformed guests, and he be permitted to approach and eat with the unelect in civilian attire.

To receive his daughter he had donned the grey suit in which he had come to the Home. Rags — workman's coarse clothing — in these he could have fronted her; but not, he thought bitterly, in pauper's garb parading as a uniform. She had come; and, after two days, gone. One day remained to him by official regulation before he must resume the ill-fitting olive drab. Blue, with its associations, might have seemed less distasteful; but that, also, was a thing of the past. Two wars had given their quota of inmates to the home since its opening, the Spanish war (if one call it a war!) and the world struggle — swaggering young upstarts touched with gas, telling veterans of the '60s they had never known what it was to fight! Very well. Let them have things their own way. He recited neither his battles nor his wounds, but these young cocks-of-the-walk might have found Gettysburg not all a summer holiday!

He rose stiffly from his chair on the barracks porch, and plodded down the path toward the mess hall. Roses tugged at his attention for something he could not quite remember. *Voluptuous roses.* . . . He paused a moment regarding them — too long a moment; when he reached the hall the hour of dining was past. A tart waitress swung the doors together in his face. Let the dawdlers get to their meals on time! She had no patience with the old rummies, especially the dumb ones who couldn't jolly a girl along a bit, or loosen up with a tip now and then. Let 'em be on time, they had nothing else to do!

It was true he did not ingratiate himself with the gaunt viragoes who served the establishment, and their disapproval of him was unconcealed. He shrank from their petty affronts; and many a stern disaster had seemed less galling than that an ill-disposed waitress should twitch a sweetmeat or a dish of olives from under his outstretched fingers, to bear it officiously to a more favored diner.

He was hungry. The discomfort would pass. He would have liked a bit of fruit, but detested the commissary whose loafers jibed openly at his unvarying economy. He turned back to his chair on the porch.

Again the roses took possession of him, as if set ineradicably in profound recesses of his life . . . *something* . . . *something* . . . *all voluptuous roses*. He could not bring the phrase to mind.

He had no time to ponder phrases. There were weightier matters to adjust. Yet recurrently, in dissolving instants of confusion or penetration, that elusive phrase and the solution of his problem seemed identical, as though to catch the one would be to grasp the other. He dismissed the feeling, as a confusion incident to age. There was much to think out, and at eighty-four one held life on sufferance. His time might be long, might be short. He must make it suffice. Until his daughter's visit he had considered all questions at end.

He had come to the Home the more surely to accomplish the purpose of his life. For he perceived with final clarity that the intention to which he set himself in coming had lain all his life at the core of his being, an accepted thing some time to be accomplished. In his early years grief had made action impossible. Later, life seemed to stretch interminable, without urgency. Adversity had come to thwart, prosperity to divert him from his purpose. Then had come peremptory, sweeping disaster; and with it, age. Overwhelmingly he had realized that life was short, and his necessity pressing; that there was, indeed, need of haste. He would act. He would do what remained to be done, and be at peace; close the wounds of his youth with the resolution of his age; accept them, seal them, call it a life — and go.

Very near had seemed those early years, when he entered the Home, as if he had slipped from his third decade to his ninth, and only youth's sharp agony and these devoted days were real. All between was a drift of shadows.

His wife lay in Greenwood cemetery. Never in thought

was she his first wife, though he had married twice, but his wife. The other woman had been part of the vicissitude of living, one who bore his name to bear him children. His wife lay in Greenwood cemetery, where for more than fifty years his thoughts had lain across her grave. His body would soon be as hers. He had been impatient of others' sentiment for their dead, and scoffed at assumptions of future life; but reason yielded to the simple human feeling that his wife's dear body must be with his in death. His life had moved toward the moment when their ashes should mingle.

The first necessity toward that end was money. He had come to the Home to reduce expenditure to the minimum, and accumulate laboriously his quarterly pensions. Time had been at his heels. He had won. He had saved with abject penuriousness. He had saved, and he had earned money by gruelling, ignominious work.

He thrust back corroding thoughts.

With funds at hand he had gone to a lawyer — not that he needed lawyers, but at this climax of a life let them have their verbiage. He had earned the right to command it. With brief precision he had set forth his wishes. His children were estranged from him; let his will make that plain; *Whereas, Augusta . . . Whereas, Carl . . . Whereas, Teressa . . . Whereas, Genevieve . . .* a covert thrust for each; something for each to remember when they could flout him no more.

His will was drawn.

He had smiled when it was finished. The instrument lent itself competently to his acrid humor. All that he possessed was specifically named. If cupidity found much implied, that existed only in the covetous eye of greed, should he quarrel with the document for that? There would be enough in his estate, surely almost enough, to defray the cost of what he required. All that he owned was bequeathed to that one of his children who should first agree to take his body, suitably clad, (specifically not in the accursed uniform of the Home) and, presenting due authorization for the dis-

interment of his wife's body, scatter to the ocean or the winds her ashes with his, under such conditions of poesy as seemed fitting.

One child would accept the terms. Avarice would see to that. Perhaps his children would vie with each other for possession of his estate. If rivalry wrought a breach in their tenuous affection — had they not flouted him? — let them know themselves for what they were.

All was provided for, the apple of discord plucked and polished and balanced on the springe his death would release. He was done with thought. He could rest.

In the moment of his satisfaction his daughter had come swooping down on him, his youngest daughter, Genevieve, whom he had not seen since her mother's death. She was the child most like him, who loved him most and considered him least. She had plunged down on him, and enveloped him in her life. She was like a river at flood, assured and irresistible, against whom there was no protection. She had always been so, he remembered. Life drove strong in her. She swept into the stagnation of other lives, changing their currents, uprooting their landmarks. She was vital.

She had remained with him two days; and had talked with an air of light detachment more baffling than animosity. Her ironic jests — were they grotesques of affection, playful gargoyles to carry off the bitterness of love? Were they delicate thrusts of venom? He could not tell. She had learned of his presence in the Home through his own oblique disclosure. After concealing his place of residence from her for three years, he had wanted her to know his situation and be wounded by the knowledge. Had she been wounded? She had followed him everywhere with genuine interest in the details of his daily life, and sat by his bed when he grew tired, listening as he lay and talked. He had touched on the fatigue of his daily walk to the city office for mail, a duty self-imposed lest her pride suffer if she must address letters to him at the Home.

She had answered evenly, "If I am not ashamed to have

you here, why should I be ashamed to address you at this place?"

"I remember," she had continued with a small smile — would it have trembled, he wondered, if it had been less controlled; would it have trembled to a tear? would it have widened to ugly triumph? He did not know. He would never fully know her — "I remember this place from the time it was built. Does it surprise you that I knew about it when I was a child? One of my toys, when this Home was being finished, was a blackboard. Mother bought it for my birthday present, and you framed it and hung it by the kitchen stove. Carl and Teressa were making fun of me because I didn't know Florida from California. Either was fairyland to me, and I had written their names on my blackboard. You were reading the *New York Sun*, and happened on a description of this very place.

"I suppose it was a year when the crops were failing — as usual. You were doing the work of ten men — as usual; and mother — I will not say what. I am not bitter. Mother, also, was as usual. You joked about the Home. The Castle of Indolence, you called it, where you would end your days. You would learn to chew, you said, jibing at mother because she had sent a small gift of tobacco to her father. If everything failed, you at least were provided for. Soldiers' wives, no; they would not be admitted. But soldiers, yes.

"Remembering it, I wonder that any child should have understood a situation so well. I knew that you were making an arrogant jest, mocking yourself and your own grandiose schemes for the future; but I understood as well the look on mother's face. She was less visionary than you. She launched no yachts on the Mediterranean in the face of blistering prairie winds, and hail, and mortgages. Solvency and honor were one word, to her, and impending failure held no humor. She heard only a sneer at her in what you said, and a taunt at her when you talked about the Home.

"So, when I learned you were here, it seemed strangely—strangely—"

She had faltered. He had known then, with a great swelling of anguish at his heart, that her smile lay on the highway to tears; but she had resumed, with her habitual air of unconcern, "It seemed fitting that you should be here. Not in some other Home — no, no, — but here. I do not say, justice. Poetic injustice, if you will."

In the silence following her words, something cruel and dark and bitter, something he had hidden in himself and refused to look at, mounted in a crescendo of anguish that was yet warm and human and worthy of the sunny plains of thought. What he had not dared ask himself was answered. He had concealed his address to spare not her pride, but his own; that he might profess she would not wittingly permit him to remain in such a place. She knew. She had offered no word of protest or dismay, and he had thrust down, down and down into those black depths no thought can reach, the question how love could let it be so; if there were no love, how filial duty could have it so; and if there were no duty — if after all her mother's teachings, no filial duty — how pride could countenance it. Not asking, he was answered. He had caused her mother to suffer; why should their daughter stand between his suffering and him? She was hard, but she had understood him. At his bitterest and most unkind, she had understood and not judged him. Could he not understand, and forbear to judge, her?

They had talked of Teressa. He had asked about his elder daughter diffidently, fearful of rebuff. She had not written to him since her mother's death. At one time Genevieve had mentioned Teressa in letters, and under his questioning had written of her almost freely for a time; had even told him of her home, a mountain ranch. Abruptly, no word more. To his questions, silence. An inadvertence, he at first had thought. More questions. Continued silence on her part, persistent, pointed. He ceased to ask of Teressa, bitterly wounded by the callous manner of the affront.

If Genevieve were not at liberty to divulge more, why had she not written: 'For reasons, I prefer not to speak of my sister'? The wound rankled. Explanation of the matter was dark. A gift he had mailed to Teressa was unreturned and unacknowledged.

He had asked if Teressa were well, and his daughter's voice, smooth, easy, with its tone of casual pleasantry between intimates — or strangers — took up the word. Teressa had been sick. She had suffered a nervous breakdown. "When you asked me for her address," she had said, "you assured me you would not approach her. I gave it to you reluctantly, for you were never scrupulous about promises. At the height of her sickness, in the face of your assurance to me, a parcel came to her, from you. Her husband didn't understand — she had never talked to him about her childhood. He brought it to her bed (men haven't much perception) and when she saw your handwriting she began to scream. They were miles from a doctor."

Hurriedly he asked of the family's financial ease. In debt? Oh, yes, they were in debt, but they would come out all right. Both worked hard. "They work as you used to," she had amended, and had reverted to the earlier question. "All Teressa wished, after she got away from you, was to be left alone. It was little to ask. After she had overcome bitterness and hatred and longing for revenge, it was little to ask. And that I should have been the one to violate that natural wish, and make her think of you once more!"

But here his irony that met hers had broken. "I am old," he had cried. "Love me, my daughter, for I am old!"

As if waiting for that cry she had thrown her arms around him, leaning across his pillow. They had lain in silence. She had not wept. Tears had drenched his face, and he had muttered that age was making a woman of him; but she, whose tears in childhood had hovered just behind the lashes, had none to shed. She had stroked his hands, and dried his cheeks, and smiled at him; and he found more comfort in her hardness than in the facile sympathy of strangers.

"I am the only one of your children who really loves you,"

she had said. "I am the only one who has never loved you from a sense of duty. I love you because you are you, and I am I, and my love for you is part of my life and mind and flesh. Loving you is part of living, as breathing is. I love you, understanding you. Carl and Augusta have always been strangers to you. You buried yourself away from them in grief, from the time their mother died. Teressa and they loved you blindly, because they were taught to love you and believe you perfect. When they saw your faults, they hated you blindly. But I loved you without being taught, and knew your faults without learning them. And I have never judged you."

"I am old," he had said again.

"You had your youth."

"I had my youth," he repeated, not knowing the direction of her thought.

"Teressa had no youth. I did. You did not hurt me as you hurt the other children. Likeness to you protected me. Besides, Teressa stood between me and injury. She had had no childhood, but with all the ferocity that was in her, she was determined that I should have. Teressa was a tiger in my protection. If her claws sometimes sank into my flesh, and her teeth bit, they left no scars. Without understanding, I understood. When Teressa pinched my arms at night in a fury of ill-temper, it was because she had worked to exhaustion in a hot kitchen that I might idle under the trees. My idleness was her idleness."

She had broken off with a laugh like a child's, and tilted toward him a shiny slipper, very slender, very French, very high of heel and narrow of toe.

"How do you like my shoes?"

"Abominable," he had retorted promptly, "an invention of the devil. Without beauty, without grace, imimical to health, and doing violence to every anatomical consideration."

"And these shoes of mine — that you couldn't hire Teressa to wear; she had too much sense, for one thing, and too much hard, grinding work to do, for another — these shoes of mine, in some queer way, are her shoes, too. They are

If Genevieve were not at liberty to divulge more, why had she not written: 'For reasons, I prefer not to speak of my sister'? The wound rankled. Explanation of the matter was dark. A gift he had mailed to Teressa was unreturned and unacknowledged.

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the shoes she never had, and never will have, now, except that I wear them.

"You remember — probably you don't — that you always bought us boys' shoes. I couldn't help clumping when I walked across the floor in school: I didn't leave my seat when I could avoid it. Occasionally I ventured to the dictionary when I wanted desperately to know something. One girl who sat near it would point to my shoes and laugh. Perhaps she didn't intend that I should see her. She is the only person in the world whom I hate, and I don't even remember her name — Cherline — Sherley — I have forgotten.

"I was ten, the year you went to Russia. You resented having to take a dress suit, at the insistence of the men who sent you, since all you wanted was to get into the Russian wheat fields and show the peasants how a binder worked. You wore the unfamiliar clothes for my amusement the night before you left. Mother was sick — as usual — while you were away. It fell to Teressa to buy me shoes. I wonder how many hours she tramped up and down the hot streets, trying to find something beautiful for what she dared spend. She wouldn't buy me boys' shoes. I can hear her crying, passionately, 'I want you to have something pretty for once, shoes like the other girls'. For myself, I don't care any more! Crying passionately, and going out again and again to hunt the shops, after hurrying home to see that mother was comfortable. She found them. A pair of woman's shoes, soft and lovely, that had been taken from the shop, and returned. Beautiful shoes, a bit rubbed on the sole, and oh, incredibly cheap! A dollar and a half? two and a half? I have forgotten. They were tiny, and in no way suited to my foot.

"'Try to wear them. Do try,' Teressa urged me. 'I couldn't possibly find anything else so good. The man was nice to me, too.'

"'The man was nice to me, too! I understand, now, what that connoted. Clerks are not always 'nice' to harassed women of thirteen, with great necessities and small funds, and a savage tongue for rejoinder.

"I wore the shoes. My feet bear witness that I wore them. I suffered them through hot afternoons in fall, when it seemed as though school would never be dismissed. I wore them the next winter, when cold made them hurt me worse. I had no gloves that winter. Other children were going — elegant! — in leather mittens with fur at the wrist. Mother said I must wear something, and all she had to give me were her own cotton gloves, too big, inches too long for me. I used to wear them until I was out of her sight as she stood watching me at the door, so she wouldn't know I cared; but I went into the cloakroom with bare hands, trying to hide them in my skirt.

"You were always solicitous that we attend school in aristocratic neighborhoods; *for the contacts*, you said.

"Oh, I could tell you more. I could sit and tell you — "

To keep from sobbing he had laughed, and the laughter had sounded silly and senile in his ears because of the sobs. He had cried once more, "I am old. Love me, love me; I did not know!" and saw it had been his duty to know.

"I love you," she had answered. "You were the kindest, most indulgent, most affectionate of fathers. I have always loved you. I love you now. Not one of your other children would dare visit you wearing shoes like mine."

Tears just behind the lashes, as he had always known her, and a ripple of laughter back of every tear!

"Can't you see the others," she had chuckled, "kicking off their pumps in a dark corner, and scrambling into brogues to come into your sarcastic presence?"

She had kissed his forehead; and held his hands, stroking them, while she turned her foot this way and that, eyeing it with disdainful satisfaction. She had said that she must leave, and sat powdering her face, touching it with rouge; coolly, all too coolly; like a brazen woman, he had started to tell her. What use? She shed admonition as a duck sheds water; and he was old.

She had said goodbye, and left him.

With her going, the pool of his thought was stirred and troubled, agitated by the current of her life. All he had

thought concluded was undone. He was thinking furiously again, but no longer of old grief, and these attenuated days. Youth's passion and his age's vain devotion to the dead became fantasia, now; and in the unregarded years between he saw life, stark and naked to his children.

He saw Teressa. Oftenest he saw her. Teressa, stocky and stout-hearted; Teressa driving a mower; Teressa high on a four-horse load of wheat; Teressa leaning anxiously over the kitchen stove, preparing supper. She had known no childhood. He saw it now. Blind, that he had neither seen nor cared to see, before!

Incidents long past crowded his mind: Teressa running errands, her very willingness annoying him, her strained anxiety to please him. Often they had worked together in the field. She had suffered from headaches when she was a child, sometimes to delirium. He had not realized that overwork might precipitate these crises.

Genevieve was not like Teressa. She slipped through life easily, and would always be of the earth, earthy. He saw her standing by his side, her yellow head scarcely above his elbow as he sat at supper. She was reading to him. One cover of her book hung unheeded — no respect for books — no proper reverence for anything. Her eyes shone, her breath quickened as she read:

*"The path of duty . . .  
He who walks it, only thirsting  
For the right, and learns to deaden  
Love of self . . . "*

The words that had eluded him hung suspended, at one with his accepted immolation.

*" . . . and learns to deaden  
Love of self, before his journey closes —*

but this is the part I wanted you to listen to —

*He shall find his stubborn thistles bursting*

*Into glossy purples that out-redden  
All voluptuous garden roses."*

"Glossy purples," she was whispering; in his arms, now, her lips against his ear, shy beyond open speech. "Like our thistles in the wheat. I always thought they were pretty, even when you swore!"

Triumphantly the roses flung their perfume from the shadowed path. It was late. He had forgotten the neglected dinner, but was no longer hungry. He left the porch, and entered his quarters: the square, impersonal room; four corners, four beds, four chairs; beside his bed the contraband typewriter and neat files, winked at by lenient officials.

He busied himself briefly with letters, sealing and addressing them; then drew from his file the bulky envelope of his will.

"Too many words," he muttered, "always verbiage!"

He took the typed sheets from their envelope, and pondered them long. Crossing the room meticulously to catch the ash in the lavatory bowl, he set a match to each.

He found fresh paper, and seated himself by the window to utilize the waning light. He was still childishly proud of his flowing penman's script:

*I hereby will and bequeath to my daughter Teressa von S——, by marriage Rothwell, all property both real and personal of which I die possessed, and appoint her my executrix without bond; my other children, namely, my daughter Augusta von S——, by marriage Weston; my son Carl von S——, and my daughter Genevieve von S——, having their full and just share.*

*Henry von S——.*

He gazed beyond his signature at a grave in Greenwood cemetery, undisturbed and forgotten; and an indifferent slab exposing his name a hundred years, perhaps, in this place of charity.

Methodically he reached for his journal to jot down the events of the day. What more was there to say? No pool, no river; only the fathomless ocean of life, of which death

itself was part. He looked upward through the window into the deepening twilight, turning again to the external world for anodyne of grief.

Pines were a blur against darkness. Roses offered themselves only in odor. He heard, high overhead, a motor drone. His hand moved steadily across the page:

*Airplanes are tracing vapor writings on the sky.*

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## DOWN OFF THE MOUNTAIN

By BELLE TURNBULL

Mrs. Ducane was mountain bred in Frisco  
Up along the Ten Mile.  
She was used to glory. Even her can pile  
Was superintended by their old heads.  
Beside the tomato cans and the peach cans  
Thundered the gray river  
From their ice-beds.

"I an the pack rats are putten out from Frisco,"  
She wrote her folks out yonder.  
"The narrow gage is shuttin down. I wonder  
If Ed the Buik ull make it over the Pass.  
Art's cordin up now with the rope lenth —  
Aint any more use for it —  
Off his windlas."

Mrs. Ducane is anchored off Pueblo,  
Up an alkali draw.  
She has for dump the untidy Arkansas,  
Who cast his mountain ways long ago —  
Between two cactus stems she peers out westward  
Straining dusty eye-sockets  
Toward the far snow.

## THREE POEMS

By C. E. BURKLUND

### A HYMN OF PRAISE

No disaster  
Can overpower  
The silent master  
Within the flower.

Even the worm  
At every trial  
Shelters a firm  
And grave denial.

Every blade  
And every leaf  
Is strongly made  
Beyond belief.

The waste of days  
Can never bind  
The voice we praise  
Within the wind.

The subtle weft  
Shall linger ever —  
The stars are left  
In every river.

The silence cast  
In song and sun  
Shall outlast  
Oblivion.

## OURS IS THE EARTH

Now with the sea-hope ended  
Let us no more  
Linger in the unprofitable utterance  
Of the shore,

But go inland, brothers, heart sinewed  
With denial  
Of the dark-laughing sea's unfathomable  
Urge to trial.

Sure are the wingless acres of the earth,  
My brothers —  
Come, let us go! Ours is the earth — the sea belongs  
To others!

---

## INCORRIGIBLE

No, I was not too much a fool,  
Just a stranger fingering the sod  
To know its quickening, and with a fear  
That Aaron's blooming rod  
Grew from a mind too rustic.  
They scrutinized my wayward turn,  
And thudded through their bentless measures,  
Constructing fetters for my arrogant concern.

I held a concourse with a leaf  
To know its falling. They severed me  
From magnitude with one companion,  
The God who molded the decree  
That mangled Bethel's children.  
I looked and saw a spider suck a fly,  
And from that moment's bloodiness discerned  
That for such things His mirth was far too high.

## DEPRESSION

By CYRIL JOHN CLARKE

Jerry Bryant sat for a long time over his coffee and roll at the lunch counter. Somebody had left a newspaper on the counter beside him and he picked it up and looked through it while he ate. "HOOVER PREDICTS RETURN OF PROSPERITY" was the headline on the front page. His mouth twisted satirically as he glanced briefly down the column given to the President's speech. "The depression confronting us at the present time is wholly a psychological one . . . the result of an unreasoned and unreasoning fear . . . as soon as these facts are faced and understood the depression will be automatically ended." Uninteresting even if true, he told himself as he turned the page. The second page was devoted entirely to accounts of the efforts of various organizations to relieve want among the unemployed. Captains of industry were making plans to have all their employees give up one day's pay a month for the cause. Swell way to get themselves regarded as benefactors of humanity, Jerry thought. Cheap and easy. The third page held the full text of the presidential oration and more news of shelters, ration kitchens and bread lines. Oh hell, he thought. He put down the main news section of the paper and looked through the sport pages. It was mostly football news. This coach feared that team; this school was accused of subsidizing players. The same old stuff. He used to find it engrossingly interesting and important. That seemed a very long time ago. It was all a little silly now and childish.

Mechanically he turned to the classified advertising section and began to read the help wanted ads. He had always read them even when he was working. They were funnier than the comic strips. He grinned now as he read some of them. "Would you be satisfied with \$150 a week to start?" Practically all of them were sales ads like that. Many of them were hardy perennials that had appeared every day for years. One ad offered salary and commission to salesmen.

He tore it out of the paper and put it in his pocket. It was probably a fake, a come-on of some kind, but he might as well take a look.

After he paid his check and bought a package of cigarettes he had ten cents left. As he dropped the dime in his pocket he assured himself that the depression was purely psychological. He lit a cigarette.

"It's getting colder outside," the waitress said.

"Oh, have you noticed that too?" he asked her.

"It looks like a tough winter," she went on, "what with all the unemployment and everything. I sure feel sorry for the people that ain't got jobs. It must be fierce."

"Yes, it must be very fierce," he said. He buttoned his coat and went toward the door.

"Well, goodbye," the waitress said.

"Goodbye."

Outside the bright sunshine took the edge from the chill October wind. He walked downtown to the Loop. Once he passed a small automobile parked at the curb. It had a sign on it advertising a new restaurant, and inside a radio was playing. "Bye bye blues," sang the radio voice. He smiled at that. Just can't get away from it, he thought.

The express elevator shot him dizzily up to the eighteenth floor of the building named in the advertisement. He found room 1805 at the end of the long marble lined corridor. The large double doors of frosted glass bore the legend, Jackson Realty Corporation, Subdividers and Builders. Real estate! Well, he had expected it. He could hear the sound of singing inside and he opened the door indifferently and went in.

On one side of the large room a group of twenty-five or thirty men were seated on stiff little chairs. They were singing and looked rather sheepish. "Yea Bo, good times are coming!" they sang while a man standing in front of them waved his arms and exhorted them to louder efforts.

"Who did you wish to see?" asked the girl at the switchboard.

"What is it," he said, "a choral society?"

The girl laughed. "You'd think so, wouldn't you?" she said. "That's the sales organization."

"Oh, the sales organization."

"It's a pep meeting," she explained. "They do that every morning now to try and stimulate business."

"Oh, I see."

"Did you wish to see somebody?" she said.

"Yes, I came in answer to the ad in the morning paper."

"Oh, yes. Then you want to see Mr. Carson. Just a moment." She put a plug in the switchboard and spoke into the mouthpiece, "A man out here to see you in answer to the ad in the paper, Mr. Carson," she said. And then after a moment she turned to Jerry and said, "Mr. Carson will see you. You can go right in. Turn to the right, the second door."

"Thanks," he said.

Mr. Carson was sitting at his desk in conference with his fingernails and a knife. He looked up and reluctantly put away the knife.

"Have a seat," he said.

"Thanks."

"You've come in answer to our advertisement? Now just — "

"Yes," Jerry interrupted him, "I came in answer to the ad. What's the dope?"

Mr. Carson's large, soft face congealed a little in disapproval of this flippancy.

"Ever had any sales experience?" he asked austereiy.

"Oh, yes. I've sold washing machines, radios, automobiles, advertising, electric ice boxes, and a few other things."

"Well, this is real estate," Mr. Carson said with the air of one divulging a state secret. "We've just opened up a new subdivision up on the North Shore and the stuff is going like hot cakes. If you work and can really hit the ball you can make yourself some real money. We furnish you with leads and give you every coöperation. A car to take your prospects out to the property and we help you to close your deals."

"I see. And the salary and commission?"

"We give you a commission of ten per cent straight on all deals."

"And the salary is what?"

"Well, after you've been with us a month or so if you've shown that you're a real producer we arrange to take care of you on a salary basis. We treat our men right if they're right with us."

"Well, that's handsome," Jerry said. "That's just fine."

Mr. Carson looked pleased and satisfied. He beamed upon the applicant with the happy look of a missionary who has just succeeded in putting a pair of pants on a heathen savage. He took a pencil from his vest pocket and reached for a pad of paper.

"Good," he said. "Now what's your name? I didn't get that."

"Oh, my name? Why — John Smith," Jerry said.

"John Smith?" Mr. Carson repeated.

"Yes, John Smith. But don't ask me about the Pocahontas story. I'm still a little sensitive about that incident. It was really all the girl's fault but I wouldn't want this to go any farther, you understand."

Mr. Carson laughed. "You're quite a kidder, Mr. Smith," he said. "Well, that never does a salesman any harm. Kid 'em along a little and they'll sign on the dotted line quicker sometimes. Now when will you be able to go to work for us?"

"Why, about two o'clock next year, I think," Jerry said.

Mr. Carson looked up startled. "What?" he gasped. And then as the full enormity of this effrontery dawned upon him he said, "Say, are you trying to kid me or what the hell is this?"

"I don't know," Jerry said wearily. "I don't know what the hell it is. Suppose you tell me what it is?"

"Oh, you're one of these wise guys," Mr. Carson said. "One of these wise guys that can never hold a job. One of these floaters, hey?"

"I'm an expert floater. Have you any floating you want done? Or maybe you need a new choir leader on salary and commission?"

Mr. Carson was growing apoplectic. "Get the hell out of here," he shouted.

Jerry laughed and stood up. "I was just wondering if you'd excuse me," he said. In the doorway he turned and said, "Cheer up, Mr. Carson; good times are coming, you know."

Down on the street again he laughed aloud at the recollection of the group of salesmen singing. He wandered slowly along through the crowds. During the first few weeks after he had lost his job he had walked fast with a brisk air of purpose and determination. He had wanted to make people think that he was going somewhere; he had wanted to make himself think so. And it had worked at first. He had been able to kid himself into thinking that he was going somewhere, that he had somewhere to go. But you couldn't go on kidding yourself forever. He knew he wasn't going anywhere. There was no sense in walking fast. It was like saying giddap to a horse on a merry-go-round. It didn't get you anywhere.

When he had lost his job — laid off they had politely phrased it to cushion the shock for him — he hadn't cared much. He had shrugged his shoulders and thought that it was just another job gone. He had never found a job that he could hold or a job that could hold him. He had quit jobs time and again for no better reason than simply that he was tired of them and he had been fired from jobs because he was indifferent to them. In either case he had not cared at all. And there had always been another job to fall into. But now there wasn't another job to fall into. He had been on the hunt for two months and there weren't any jobs. The jobs had all mysteriously disappeared. What became of them, he wondered. It was a curious thing, an economic depression. There were no jobs and everybody talked about being hard up and yet life seemed to move on just the same

as always. All these people hurrying past him in the street looked just the same as street crowds had always looked. He wondered how many of them were putting on the kind of act he had put on; pretending to be busy and urgent and important. Probably a lot of them, he decided.

He turned on Michigan Avenue. Sleek and shining automobiles flowed by in an endless stream. No depression there, he thought. Some of the cars drew up at the curb and chauffeurs jumped out and opened the doors and women and girls got out and went into shops. He regarded the girls detachedly. Many of them were pretty and all of them were very smart and assured looking. He had scarcely thought of girls during the past few weeks. They seemed a little unreal, like creatures from another world. Well, they were from another world and for another world too. They weren't for the world he was living in now. Girls were for the light and happy times. He didn't need them now or want them.

A collection of diamond rings in a jeweler's window caught his eye and he stopped to look at them. Beside him two girls were exclaiming rapturously over the jewels. The sight of the diamonds left him unmoved, and listening to the two girls he thought it strange what a passion women had for the things. It wasn't so much a passion for the diamonds, for their beauty. It wasn't so much that they admired them as that they desired them, he thought. They considered the diamonds in relation to themselves; thought how they would look wearing them. It was probably a sexual feeling, he decided, a sort of exhibitionism. He wondered what the girls would think if he mentioned this idea to them. They'd think he was a moron, probably, and call a cop. The thought amused him and he looked at the girls but they had started to move away.

As he turned away from the window a shabby old man sidled up to him.

"Could you spare the price of a cup of coffee, mister?" the old man asked.

The old man had no overcoat. The collar of his dirty frayed jacket was turned up and the lapels were pinned across his chest. His face looked a little blue and it was covered with a dirty stubble of grey beard, and his nose was red and slightly bulbous.

Looks like the eclipse of a damned good drinking man, Jerry thought. He felt the dime in his pocket and slid his fingers over it several times. Then he drew it out and dropped it in the old man's dirt-lined palm. What good was a dime? Still it was probably a foolish gesture to give your last dime away. But romantic, he thought, very romantic. Noble young man gives last dime to aid fellow sufferer. It made him kin to all the world.

"See that you don't go out and get drunk on that," he said. "I'd hate to think that I'd been instrumental in starting you on the road to whoopee."

"Thanks, mister," the old man said. "I sure appreciate it. I haven't had a thing to eat since yesterday morning. Things sure are bad. I never saw things so bad."

"It's merely an illusion," Jerry said. "You should get your mind on a higher plane. If you read the newspapers you'll find out the depression is just psychological."

"Well, maybe it is; but if I'm hungry that ain't just psychological, I guess."

"I'm afraid you're a cynic. Our statesmen aren't hungry. Doesn't that prove anything to you?"

The old man stared blankly out into the street. "I dunno," he said. "I been thinking they ought to chloroform us old fellows when we get to be sixty years old. I was sixty a month ago and I'm no good for anything any more. I couldn't likely get a job even if there was any work. They ought to chloroform us and put us out of the way. We'd be better off, I guess. Well, anyway, thanks, mister."

The old man shuffled away along the avenue. Jerry stood for a moment looking after him and then turned and walked in the opposite direction. It wasn't really amusing to kid that old guy. He must have a perverted sense of humor.

He felt sorry for the old man. Still if you came right down to it he was worse off himself. The old man could beg and if a newspaper man came across him he'd make a story of him; one of those pathetic human interest stories that wring the readers' hearts. But he wasn't even good copy for the papers. He was just a damned nondescript white collar idler. Oh, hell, forget it. The first thing he knew he'd be feeling sorry for himself, be telling himself that he just hadn't got the breaks. Then he would be done for. He'd do better to start looking up a bread line to break into. Just the same the thought of bread lines was a little depressing.

In the crowd coming toward him he saw a man he knew, a man he had been in college with, Jim Lyman. Looks prosperous and cocky, Jerry thought. Lyman saw him and stopped.

"Hello, Bryant."

"How are you, Lyman?"

"Can't complain." They shook hands and Lyman said, "What do you know?"

"Oh, nothing much."

"What are you doing these days?"

"Making a survey of the unemployment situation," Jerry said.

"Oh, not working, eh? Too bad." Lyman looked disinterested. "Well, I've got to get along. Good luck, old man."

"Thanks. Same."

Afraid I was going to touch him, Jerry thought as he walked on. Well, why hadn't he touched him? He had always borrowed money carelessly enough. He had always been borrowing money until payday. Money for liquor or to take a girl out dancing or to dinner. But it had only been until payday. He had always settled up. It wasn't the same now. It would be like begging, like asking somebody to prop you up. Just damned pride. All right, just damned pride, but there it was. Anyhow you needed pride most

when you didn't have anything else. He wanted money all right, but he didn't want it with a dose of pity and contempt. The bread line was better than that.

He walked up the drive to the park and turned in and went along the gravel path. There was a water fountain there and he decided to take a drink because he was beginning to get hungry. Somebody had left the fountain turned on full and the water was leaping high in the air and the wind was bending it and blowing it into a silver spray that glistened in the sun. He got around to the windward side and tried to turn it down so he could get a drink, but the handle was stuck and wouldn't turn; so he went on down the path and sat on a bench.

The dead leaves fell in a shower around him and the wind whirled them along the path with a hard dry sound. They covered the grass like a thick carpet. The grass was still green and the dead brown leaves looked rather incongruous like a man wearing a straw hat and an overcoat. He lit a cigarette and sat there smoking and trying not to think of anything except the leaves and the grass and the naked looking trees. The sun felt warm on his back and the sky was very blue coming through the gaunt trees. He didn't feel so depressed now. He felt pretty good. It was very pleasant sitting there. He felt almost like a man who was sitting in the park taking the air.

Occasionally people passed by in the path; people strolling and people hurrying. Two women wheeling baby carriages stopped to admire each other's baby. Once a girl and man walked by and the girl was clinging to the man and Jerry heard her say, "He's found out, I tell you, and he's just crazy mad. I don't know what'll happen. You've got to promise you'll stick by me." She sounded a little hysterical and the man looked worried and unhappy and said, "All right, all right, don't get excited." And then they were gone beyond his hearing. A group of children went by going home from school. They scuffled and argued and made a lot of noise. Then for a while nobody came along the path at all and it was quiet with only the brittle sound of the

leaves blowing around his feet and the subdued hum from the traffic over on the drive. He lit another cigarette and burned one of the crisp leaves on the bench beside him with the match and watched it crumble to ashes and blew it off the bench. He felt quite rich and careless.

Somebody came along the path and stopped beside him and a voice said, "Say, buddy, could you help an ex-service man get something to eat?"

He felt annoyed. Why did this bum have to come and dangle that damned skeleton before him just when he was feeling so good? That old soldier gag always annoyed him anyhow. Trying to trade a fake heroism for a loaf of bread.

He looked up and said, "War does whet the appetite, doesn't it? Ex-service men are always hungrier than anybody else."

"Well, a guy that's fought for his country is entitled to something, ain't he?"

"Sure, love and kisses."

"Yeah, love and kisses is right. When we came back from France we were the nuts. Nothing was too good for us. And now what are we?"

"I'll bite. What are you now?"

"Say, were you in the service?"

"No. I was a German spy."

"A German spy?"

"Yes. I'm Captain Boy-Ed."

"You don't look much like a German to me."

"I'm not. I just worked for the Germans. I'm a soldier of fortune. I'm a Russian, a blonde Russian like Olga Baclanova. I'm a Soviet agent now. We're going to seize this country and establish free love. Unless the pope beats us to it. The pope wants to seize this country too. It must be a pretty good country if everybody wants to seize it and yet you go about feeling bitter because you've lost the wine and women of France. You aren't a true patriot. Perhaps it's not such a good country after all if it makes people feel like you do. Maybe we'd better not seize it at all."

"Aw, nuts. How about the price of a meal?"

"I'm sorry but I have no money. Russians have no money. We're sustained by our devotion to a great and noble cause. Trotsky ran off with all the money. He buried it in Siberia and we can't do anything about it because we're afraid if we seize him he'll bump himself off and then we'll never find the roubles. It's too bad too because it spoils everything for us when we can't seize something. But all we can do is maintain the status quo."

"Aw, nuts," the ex-soldier said again and turned away.

Jerry laughed and said, "Here, soldier, have a cigarette. A cigarette and a big drink of water is just as good as a meal. Anybody will tell you that. Especially anybody that's just had a good dinner."

The ex-soldier took the cigarette and lit it and said, "What was all that you were giving me?"

"I was kidding," Jerry said. "It was a sort of death dance. Gaiety of the doomed."

"What's the matter, are you on your uppers too?"

"Yes."

"Boy, it's tough," the ex-soldier said. "Conditions sure are lousy."

"They're pretty lousy all right."

"Well, thanks for the dream," the ex-soldier said. "I'll see you in the bread line sometime."

He went away down the path and Jerry sat watching him until he disappeared. It was getting colder. The sun was gone and the sky was getting gray. It wasn't pleasant sitting there now. The feeling of pleasure was all gone and he was thinking of bread lines again. He wondered what time it was and thought it must be about three o'clock and decided to go downtown again. Something might happen downtown.

On the way out of the park he stopped at the fountain again and tried to get a drink but the fountain was still going like a geyser and he only got wet and swore and went on out of the park. It was getting much colder. The wind blowing off the lake was cold and piercing and the lake was

gray and sullen looking and was splashing high against the concrete wall. He walked fast to keep warm.

Downtown he found it was half past three o'clock and he wondered where to go. He thought if he walked around the Loop once more he'd go crazy; he decided to go into the Public Library and look over some of the magazines.

The reading room was crowded. The occupants were mostly bums. The air was stale and stuffy with the smell of unwashed bodies and unbrushed clothes. God, what a stink! Jerry thought. It was the odor of failure, he thought, the stink of human decay. What a swell place to choose to forget his troubles in. The tall broad windows shivered violently in the wind. The bleak light outside was too weak to penetrate the glass and the reading lamps on the tables were turned on. There were only a few magazines left in the rack, mostly copies of *Outdoor Life*, *Field and Stream* and others given to praise of the wide open spaces. Those would be left in the rack all right, he thought. Most of the people in the room knew all they wanted to know about the great outdoors. There was a copy of the *Illustrated London News* and he took it and went and found a chair at one of the tables. He took off his coat and hung it on the back of the chair and sat down and opened the magazine.

There were pictures of Marshall Field and his wife sitting on a moor in England where they were honeymooning. Why was it called a moor? A moor was a nigger. Othello was a moor. They weren't sitting on Othello. But Desdemona had sat on Othello. The Prince of Wales was inspecting a regiment of guards and Ghandi's wife was weeping for India and for Ghandi. A great man, Ghandi. A kind of a nut too but pretty great just the same. Tallulah Bankhead was smiling for her public. That was a hell of a name, Tallulah. She was a southern girl. He remembered seeing her a long time ago before she went to London to be the toast of the town. There were a lot of liquor advertisements and they were the most interesting things in the magazine. They were very good. Where was the anti-Saloon

League? They ought to suppress this magazine. It encouraged disrespect for the law.

He lost interest in the pictures and leaned back and looked around the room. Many of the bums were asleep, with their elbows propped on the table and their heads resting in their hands or leaning back in the chairs with their chins drooping onto their chests. They'd probably stay there until the place closed for the night. What a hell of a place to come to when he was feeling low. The neat middle aged man across the table from him didn't look like a bum. The man looked up and caught Jerry's eye and nodded. He looked back at his magazine and then looked up at Jerry again and spoke.

"This Mencken is a smart man all right but he's always against everything. It's easy to cry things down but where would progress be if everybody took that attitude?"

"I don't know," Jerry said. "I don't even know where it is now. Where would it be?" Everybody was asking him questions today; he must look like an oracle or something.

"It wouldn't be nowhere, that's where it would be," the man said.

"It would serve it right too," Jerry said.

"You've got to believe in something," the man said. "He don't believe in anything. He's an agnostic."

"He's a bootlegger," Jerry said. "He's the biggest bootlegger in New York. He's got the government booze concession there. That's how he got his start as a writer. He used to write liquor labels for the Kentucky moonshiners. But success went to his head and he began to write all kinds of stuff and it ruined the pure classicism of his style. Mencken isn't his real name, you know. That's just a nom de plume. His real name is George Jean Nathan. He's all right though. He's really got a soft heart. He supports two orphanages and an old people's home and he attends the Daisy Chain ceremony at Vassar every spring."

"I don't believe it," the man said.

"Neither do I," said Jerry. "Maybe I've got him mixed up with William Lyon Phelps."

He got up and put on his coat. The man was staring at

him all the time as if he were a nut. What had put all that stuff in his head? The liquor advertisements maybe. Association of ideas. Just goes to show you the insidiousness of this psychoanalysis and all this modern stuff. He grinned at the man and said, "I wouldn't read that stuff if I were you. There's nothing in it. It's subversive. It'll corrupt you if you keep on with it. Stick to the Bible and Science and Health. They show you the only true path."

He put his magazine back in the rack and went out of the room and downstairs.

When he came out of the library it was beginning to get dark. He stood at the top of the steps and looked out into the street. The rush hour was just beginning and people were hurrying along the sidewalk and dodging in and out between the cars in the street, and the automobile horns made a continuous raucous stream of noise. Suddenly he felt very tired. Tired of killing time. There was so much time. He could never kill it all. No matter what he did time kept coming on in an endless procession. Kill an hour and there was a whole day to face, kill a day and a week loomed up ahead. He looked over at the avenue where the traffic was flashing swiftly by under the green light. It would be pretty easy to step in front of one of those flashing cars. He probably wouldn't even feel it. He stood there hearing the soft shuddering sound of the car striking his body, the wild shriek of the brakes, the screams of the people in the street, and then the traffic light changed from green to red and the stream of cars dwindled and stopped and his brain relaxed and he went on down the steps.

As he turned the corner he heard somebody say, "Hi, Jerry." He stopped and turned.

"Why, Bill, hello," he said. "When did you come back to Chicago?"

They were shaking hands and Bill said, "Last week. Just got back last week. Say, where've you been? I've been looking you up. Nobody seemed to know where you were. Where've you been?"

"Oh, I've been around."

"Around? You must have been. Nobody's seen you."

"I've been making a retreat, Bill. But what's the matter with New York?"

"Nothing. New York's all right. It's a swell town. I just got transferred back here is all. But you know what I wanted to see you for? I wanted to pay you that twenty bucks I borrowed before I went away. Always meant to send it to you but you know how it is with me and letters. We don't mix."

"I'd forgotten all about it, Bill," Jerry said. He had forgotten it. He had almost forgotten Bill Richter. He stared past him now and up at a street lamp that had just flickered on and thought, a god from the machine. Bill gave him some money and he said, "Thanks, Bill, that's elegant. You know what you are, Bill? You're a god from the machine. You're a regular little god from the machine."

"The hell you say," Bill said. "That's great. I didn't even know I had a machine. What kind is it? I hope it's a closed job. It's getting too cold for an open car."

"I don't know what kind it is, Bill, but it's a swell machine."

"Well, listen, Jerry, look me up, d'you hear? I'm back at the old place. We'll go out and make whoopee or merry or somebody. I've got to beat it now. I've got a date for dinner. I'll be seeing you."

"You bet, Bill. So long," Jerry said.

He still had the money in his hand and he put it in his pocket and all at once he felt very light as though he might be blown away by the wind. He wasn't joining the bread line after all. Not yet anyway. And maybe tomorrow things might be better. Tomorrow he might get a job. Probably not, though; tomorrow would probably be just like today. Tomorrow was always just like today. But anyway he didn't have to look for a bread line. He was rich, nigger rich. He laughed and went into a restaurant.

## THREE POEMS

By FLORA J. ARNSTEIN

### INTERIM

Pending the furtherance of more vital things,  
There is this hour — to sweep the eyes  
The length of the long California hills,  
To follow the dipping valleys, the dark accents  
Of portentous oaks, the water-weaving eucalyptus,  
Or the oblivion of grey seas —  
And in this light that links all things  
In acquiescence,  
To find oneself as well  
Swung out into limpid participation —  
Is this perhaps no less a furtherance ?

### SCULPTOR SPEAKS

Swinging thumbs traced your edged eyebrows,  
Weighted ones pressed the sockets,  
And winged ones moulded your skull brow.  
The bones of your cheek followed a sliding hand,  
And your chin was caught in a palm cup.  
It was I who modeled the face of you,  
And the dome of your head,  
And the rooted ears . . .  
But who was it made your elusive eyes,  
And the mouth that will not call me master?

## GLEANERS OF WHISPERS

My ears are gleaners of whispers —  
The mouse foot-steps of the rain,  
The wind chasing its tail in an eddy of dust,  
The palms rattling, in secret, their slat-ribs,  
And the distant surf rolling heavy with a sleeper's sigh.

Even when I am laid in the ground  
My ears shall garner the crack of the horizon  
When the morning sun wedges through,  
The padding of day along cloud-muffled skies,  
And the wary twilight  
Picking a noiseless path under the trees;  
The moon rustling satin flounces,  
The stars popping through the taut darkness,  
And the slow earth creaking,  
Spilling its waters,  
Warming its crust,  
Telling its soundless secrets to me,  
The buried one, gleaner of whispers.

## EMERGENCE

By DAVID CORNEL DE JONG

Open large doors upon studded hills,  
That the eagles may stalk forth —  
Eagles bearing upon crucified wings  
The pine trees' burden,  
The lighted cones, the mountain ritual;  
That down the clefts  
The wingéd ones may slant,  
Sails brushing the rock —  
Down gullies, down to dry river-beds,  
Where carven lizards, petrified, still breathe,  
Palpitant — one with the eagles' breast-lift,  
The heat-releasing canyons,  
The systole and diastole of hills and valleys.

## CAKE

By MOE BRAGIN

The handsome automobile salesman yawned and crackled a tabloid newspaper. He glanced at the wholesale butcher's wife and the stenographers playing bridge on the hotel verandah.

It was "milking" time, four o'clock in the afternoon, when the children had their milk and cake. As usual there was a lot of noise. One of the older boys had stolen a piece of cake from a girl. The two mothers faced each other like hens and threatened to make the feathers fly. Then the builder's wife was so thirsty that she drank up half her baby's milk, and the child began kicking and crying.

One of the stenographers stretched and showed her small fish teeth. "Honest-to-goodness, I'm so bored I think only of eating."

The wholesale butcher's wife smacked a card down. "Nothing to be ashamed of. Last year in the hotel we stayed they had a French baker. He was good-looking, too, as they come. He could make pastry with nuts like butterflies and grasshoppers and birds and all that. Here their cake is awful. I put in another complaint, and if this baker don't wake up and stop giving us cakes with raisins burnt like charcoal, we're going somewhere else, you'll see. . . ."

While the women watched him out of the corner of their eyes, the automobile salesman yawned and yawned and finally threw away his paper. He picked a hair off his flannels, and ran out on the lawn.

On the lawn it was as hot as in an oven. Maybe it would be cooler in the shade of the trees on the hill where the chicken coops were clustered. He crossed the shriveled brook and took the dusty footpath. On his left he could see the big meadow and the black boiler of the old sawmill looking like a charred beast which had struggled with the terrible sun and almost escaped to the pine woods before it had succumbed.

There was some one already lying under the trees. It was old Mike, who did all the odd jobs around the hotel. He was on his belly, his suspenders down, and a cross of sweat on his shirt.

The salesman spread his handkerchief on the grass and sat down gingerly. "It's hotter than hell," he yawned.

Mike rolled over with a wheeze. Drops of sweat were in the hollows of his temples, and his open shirt showed the gray soaked mat on his chest.

"Yessir, one of the hottest days I kin remember in more'n seventy years. Glad I got a chance to rest here a minute." He blinked his little dog-eyes that looked as if they had been skinned and were leaking. "If they knowed I'm a-resting here they'd git after me and have me do something even if it was only chasing my tail around."

"You done right to sneak away. It's too hot to breathe or even sit with them hens on the verandah."

"What's them folks doing?"

"Just killing time playing bridge, and waiting to eat."

"Bridge?"

"Yes, ever play it?"

"No, that's something I never done much — cards. I used to like a sort of quiet smoke but it got against my lungs."

"How about a nice drink?"

He shook his head and waved his fingers, blue and red from overwork like radishes just dug up. "Sally, she's my wife, wouldn't hardly let vinegar come to the house. Her daddy was a drinking man. The only time I got a good hankering for it was when she left me. . . . It weren't so easy with us. . . ."

The salesman flicked his silk handkerchief at a pesty fly and gave a long sigh. Mike studied his crumpled hands and said nothing. For a few moments not a breath seemed to stir either in the meadow or in the shade of the trees. And then feebly from the underbrush around the brook a phoebe called, and a car riding the road faintly purred.

Mike scratched the sweat off his face. He mumbled, "The dominie meets me down the line onctet, and he says, 'Michael, why don't I see you in church often as I used?' I says to him straight from the shoulder, 'Dominie, I got to live and I got to work. I'm an old bottle that done nobody no harm. . . . He should love us big and little buggers without church but do He? Do He always? Look at them that was my family.' "

He stopped and took a deep breath. He lowered his head and then raised it like a duck after dibbling. "And I says, 'I says my prayers every God's day, mostly in bed when I have the time. Only when Sally, she's my wife, she died, I couldn't say them for a time somehow. Somehow I couldn't git to pray then.' "

He pulled a rag from his pocket and mopped his face. A raisin dropped into his shirt, and his face became covered with blackish crumbs. "'Many a bad bugger goes to church Sundays and the rest of the time he's rotten as a cock of hay in wet.' And the dominie looks at me once, twice, and says I'm right, by Jiminy Frost."

All his strength sapped by this account of his meeting with the minister, Mike fell wearily on his back. His breath whistled through his nose. He peered up at the leaves of the lifeless butternut tree while a vein of sweat broke and ran down into his mouth.

The salesman looked at him with an amused expression. He took out a file and began manicuring his nails. "Yes, that's so," he said after a while, "a church ain't everything."

A grasshopper clicked like an old clock somewhere. The old man raised himself feebly on an elbow. "Sally and me used to talk such things like church and God afore she went after Johnny and Bob and her paw. He was a drinking man and the dominie once calls him 'a puffball of hell.' We kept him till he stretched out. Johnny got hisself killed in the war but Bob, he worked in a sawmill up the river. Somehow two saws got loose and after him like bitch bees, and you

couldn't tell him apart from guts after they was through. That's — that's what got Sally."

He caught his breath and looked at his fingers. Then he closed his eyes and spoke out. "Ten years last April, middle April, I been without her. You couldn't find nowheres on Jesus' earth one like her. . . ."

His voice died away into a faint whisper. He blinked and then gaped, his mouth showing one black tooth in his jaw, black as a tarred corn grain. After a while, he began mumbling to himself, "Ten years . . . she was a good one . . . after Bob and Johnny boy . . ."

Suddenly from the other side of the meadow, from behind the barn whose shadow aproned a manure heap, the sound of giggling and shrieking broke out.

"Don't, ooh, don't. I'm so weak from being hungry."

"I'm not fooling. The last blackberry you ate had a real kicking red horse ant on it."

The honeymoon couple — the teacher and his wife — and a friend, who were all staying at the hotel, all three in bathing suits, were running wildly toward the butternut tree.

"We saw the waterfall," burst out the young wife, her arms full of mountain laurel. "It's so beautiful — just like a bride's veil." Her eyes shone. "It's prettier than what you told us, Mike."

"I — I don't know, missus. Sally used to like to sit there often. I ain't been up years, ain't got the pepper I had once."

"Going into the real estate business now?" said the teacher to the salesman, who was still cleaning his nails. Then he turned to his wife: "She swallowed an ant, she swallowed a big horse ant."

Both women took after him, shrieking and throwing flowers.

Mike gazed in their direction long after they had vanished at the foot of the hill, and the gate under the honey locusts was still again. Finally he ground his eyes with the heels of his hands and brooded in the burning silence.

With a yawn the salesman put away his nail file. As he stretched, he noticed a stained hunting license pinned to the side of Mike's cap. "Lots of hunting and fishin' around here, heh?"

"Hunting?" Mike mumbled, and shook his head. "Used to . . . not now."

He held his arm up stiffly, and it shivered in its web of hair. "Shakes like a popple now."

Opening his right fist, he showed where his thumb and index fingers were cut off beyond the knuckles. Irregular seams crawled over the skin. "Fine days it don't hurt bad. When I was a shaver, I worked for the old man on the farm till I gits a job in the excelsior factory. I worked more than forty years there, wasn't away one day but when she died, Sally. . . . 'Bout a week after, the machine chops them off. They tells me, 'Grandpaw, you ain't young no more, git home, grandpaw.' "

He sank to the ground on his back and looked off towards the pine wood. In a short time, he continued mumbling. "Yessir, pigeons was thicker than hair in a hosstail, when Sally and me was married. She was one jimdandy cook, brought her the fat of the land, trout and small-mouth bass that pulls on a line like a hoss and rabbits and squirrels by the bushel. . . ."

His voice trailed off. He shook his head helplessly and began brooding once more.

Nodding as if he understood, the salesman yawned and stretched again. As he looked up, he spied a kingbird, its beak open from the heat, perched on the roof of a chicken coop. He scooped up a stone and, with a loud laugh, flung it. The kingbird rose, flirting its tail angrily, and then sheared away, its tail feathers making a whitish band in the heat haze.

He dusted his hands and then asked, "Ever hunt with dogs?"

Mike screwed up his eyes. "There was Sally I calls after Sally, she's my wife. She got her the puppy from some rich

folks up the line from the city when she helped in their place onces. Sally was a beagle, quick's a whip, smart like silk. I took right good care after her after Sally was gone. Once she lugs a rabbit in the house, a fat doe. 'Sally,' I says, 'where's its mate?' Next day she comes in with one big fat buck in her mouth. Yessir, she was one dog since Adam, and you could talk to her like she was a man . . . now . . ."

He clasped his hands on his breast and looked dimly up where the boughs of the butternut cut a woolly chunk of sky.

"Why don't you bring her over here?" the salesman asked. "I like dogs. We got a collie at home, nice pet."

"I works on the cement road down below here with Swede boys and Eyetalians and niggers after they chucks me from the factory. One night I come home, and there's Sally in the middle of the road, all swamped in blood."

He wet his lips and cleared his throat.

"Sally I calls after Sally, she's my wife. I put all her inners best I knew how back agin. She never peeped but lay on the bed, one, two, three days. Then she was up a-wagging her britches. I let her out and waits. Then I gits up and snoops around all over. Under the lilac bush she was deader than a doornail."

He left off with a deep puff. One of his hands twitched, the other balled up his rag of a handkerchief.

"She was clean like Sally. She didn't want to die in no house. I made her a kindy little box and buried her soft one night in the cimitery so they couldn't see, right next to Sally, back of the church."

He took a deep breath, moved his lips as though he were praying, and looked up at the sky.

The lowering sun was a ball of red-hot iron, and a chain of dark clouds was drawing in upon it from the southwest. From a pocket in a hill on the next farm, a pair of crows had fluttered out like two black hands and were settling with a great racket on a maple close by.

"Sally or my boy Tommy could a-fixed her up better so maybe she wouldn't a-died. But Tommy was away on a job. Now he's got a real stiddy job trucking in the city. He's leaving tomorrow. Yessir, Tommy's a hand at anything from whittling a whistle to fixing the best machinery. He made the boss the water tank near the dance hall he ain't got paid for yet. Yessir, he's to the big city I ain't never seen."

And the face, which had lighted up for a moment with pride, burned out as quickly, leaving it like a handful of damp ashes. "Yessir, and he paints, painted our place, and, yessir . . ."

The salesman looked at the wrinkled face and said, "Fine job, fine." Then he remembered how his friends and he had ridden past the newly-painted shack late one moonlit night, with ukeleles and girls and some of the women whose husbands were in the city. A candle was flagging in the window. The old man flashed past, waiting at the door with his suspenders down like harness on an old horse. Yet two or three hours later they could see him creeping up the road in the faint dawn back to his job around the farm and hotel.

"Fine job. Tommy must be a shark at painting," the salesman said as he glanced down at his wrist watch. Then he jumped up with a cry, "Gosh, it's supper time already."

With much creaking of its bones the figure at his feet sat up and looked in a daze through the webs of heat. From the grass there came a chirp. A sparrow hopped to the footpath, chirping as if to cheer itself. It stopped suddenly, its bill open like a split seed. Instantly the salesman grabbed a stone and pitched it with all his might. The stone struck the sparrow which cheeped a shrill cheep, fluttered a few feet and then fell into a chicken coop where one of the roosters jabbed at it.

"By Jiminy Frost, I got to git the cow," old Mike whispered finally, and then heaved to his fours. He got on his legs and looked around with some hesitation.

At last he piped, "How long you going to stay hereabouts?"

"About two or three more days. There ain't enough fun around here."

"Yessir, they don't treat nobody extra good around here. The cook and waiters and the girls that make up the rooms wants to leave, and the boss, he owes me thirty dollars for two months and only Jesus knows when I'll git a lick at it."

All his grievances streamed out in a bitter garrulousness, while he rocked his head from side to side and gestured with uncertain fingers.

"Yesterday the boss's wife, she give me left-over spinach for dinner that kindy looked like some old horse with bad teeth slobbered and dropped. And I ain't never had milk or butter or eggs oncet. And no cake, no cake at all. She ain't like Sally, she's my wife, who weren't stingy no how. She used to make muffins and corn fritters and soda biscuits and apple dumplings and pies with spicings you call nutmegs — apple pies and cherry pies fit for the saints.  
. . ."

He stopped with a little moan. His eyes wandered to the edge of the nearest chicken coop where a wild cherry stood with unripe cherries hanging down like strings of green peas. He tried to say something again but his voice broke in the breathless air, he swayed and looked prayerfully towards heaven.

A black bullhead of a cloud was charging overhead, and in the gathering mist the sun was shorn of his terrific flames and appeared a white plate, empty in the west.

"Yessir, I says to her, 'Missus, why do you hide the cake till it's stale and give me none?' Well, she upped at me and puffed her nose. She ain't at all like Sally. Bread's hard when you git left overs. I like a piece of cake sometimes, I like it now . . ."

With a sudden jerk, he tried to straighten himself, but his knees were half-bent and his face all puckered.

"And I tells the boss and he tells her and she gives me a piece like this." He measured off his broken thumbnail and held it up to the mouth with the one tooth. Veins of sweat broke on his face, and his little skinned eyes seemed to break, too. He wiped himself with his rag. Crumbs stuck to his face and head.

Suddenly a gust of wind whipped up the butternut tree. The leaves began beating the old trunk. The bullhead of a cloud had changed into an immense swollen shape which swallowed the sun quickly and blackened the sky. The wind blew harder, and lightning sank a red horn into the shuddering west. Thunder roared and bowled all along the floor of heaven, reëchoing in the lashed pine woods. And the buttercups and daisies were gobbled up in the furious grass.

"I must git — git the cow in them woods the kids chased," the old man choked in the awful din.

He started forward, hitching up his trousers and dragging himself out into the open. The wind clutched him and blew up his clothes so that his legs and part of his stockingless feet were visible. Lightning cut a sear across the hills. And as he lifted his hands to his eyes, he half-sobbed, "Sally was different; but she don't give me most times cake big's a fly, yessir . . ."

Thunder drowned out the rest of his words. The wind pitched into him and drove him through the grass. He began struggling with his suspenders which hung down like harness. As he stumbled towards the clouded woods, the little light left in the sky vanished, and he was soon blotted out in a darkness deep as night.

A bead of rain splattered on the salesman's hand. With a whoop he scooted down the hill, vaulted the fence near the honey locusts, and in another moment was on the verandah of the hotel cool as a cucumber.

Many of the guests were impatient to see the coming storm. As waves of wind and rain swept birds, grasshoppers, and butterflies past them, they hurrahed and clapped hands.

The hotel owner's wife, in a pongee dress and alligator sandals, trotted up and sniffed, "How wonderful." The wholesale butcher's family, the builder's wife, and the stenographers crowded around her with cries of delight. One of them stuck out a hand and withdrew it immediately with an "ouch." Hailstones were streaking past punching the earth. Amidst great laughter the school teacher struck a pose and bellowed, "Hail the hail!"

After she had finished admiring the storm, the hotel owner's wife said, "Anybody seen that Mike? He should be in the kitchen ready for work."

"I was talking to him on the hill. He's gone to look for the cow."

"He'll be late again, always fussing round that cow and calling her 'Sally.' We'll have to get somebody else next week; he's so queer nobody'll have him now. Why, only yesterday I gave him a piece of raisin cake, and he went around the whole day, sucking the crumbs like a baby."

As she laughed, there was another reel of thunder, a long line of lightning snapped, and the gutters on the verandah roof gasped and choked. The ladies, fearful for their evening dresses, hugged the walls like colored fat flies.

"Supper, supper, supper," cried the flat-footed waiter with the hollow voice. His short white jacket bellied in the wind, and, as he rang the handbell, it jingled like a couple of pennies in a boy's pocket.

The school teacher danced up to him and salaamed. "What kind of cake have we got tonight, Charlie or Jake or What's-your-name?"

"Honey cake with almonds."

With a squeal his wife pounced on the school teacher. Behind her the rest, the salesman among them, pushed into the dining room, laughing and shrieking, "Honey cake, cake, cake."

## THERE IS A DOOR

By RICHARD WARNER BORST

There is a door that always has stood open,  
Awaiting me with welcome, though all others  
May hold unmoved against my beating hands.

Somewhere it waits, upon a secret landing,  
In life's tall mansion, where, behind an arras,  
Or past a shadowy staircase, I shall find it.

Unknowing what has chanced, I shall pass through,  
To reach the place in my brief pilgrimage  
That I have least endeavored to attain.

Unwitting, I shall cross its quiet threshold,  
Nor pause to look at what I leave behind;  
And the door will close as silently and gently

As snow falls in November, while the lock,  
Soundless as caverned air, will gently slip  
Into its socket, never to be withdrawn.

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## THE SKETCH BOOK

### DUNE'S END

By MARGARET P. COLEMAN

As soon as they reached the sea it would be over. Now what did she mean by that, she asked herself, pulling a sharp-edged blade of grass between her teeth. But she felt that it was so. When they came to the end of the dunes and sighted the first blue strip of water she would know that

something was gone forever. It wasn't just the walk; the ploughing through endless stretches of sand that sifted into their shoes and made them as heavy as great bags holding a balloon down to earth; that, too, would be at an end. For they had only to slide down the bluff with giant steps that carried them several feet at a time and brought the loose sand down upon them like an avalanche; to reach the firm strip of beach where the waves had just washed back; and to follow it, playing tag with the spasmodic clutching of the water, to the row of cottages whose windows were blinking in the deepening light of the western horizon. Yes, the walk was almost over. But the other thing, the golden atmosphere of this afternoon with Gene, in which the little dancing particles came alive whenever he spoke to her, or smiled, even. Some people, she thought, set up wave currents all around them. And that was the way with Gene. A sort of magnetic field of energy was set up between them by an exchange of words or gestures. Even now as they lay here on the sand, silent, staring up at the tinted china sky, that had one crack of white cloud zigzagging down its curved side, she could feel herself held in the grip of his personality, as an iron shaving is held near a magnet without quite touching it.

Queer — that one slit of cloud on the whole blue bowl of sky. If it were a crack the sky might cave in and fall upon them — But what was she thinking of? Oh, yes, the end of their walk which, she thought, symbolized the end of something else. If only things could stay as they were; if one could hold the tides back, keep the wave poised in a great scroll of green before it leapt upon one. Relations with people were just as transitory, she told herself, as the angle of sunshine bent in the prism of a wave. Those moments, when, with caught breath, one waited for the foam to come circling around one's feet, passed, — and the next wave was never quite the same.

Perhaps she was foolish to feel that their friendship — no, it was a little more than that, — was almost over. He said he would write; but letters would be a poor substitute for the grip of his lean brown fingers. One might as well try to recall the ocean by setting a conch shell to the ear and listening for the faint hum within its heart.

Gene had turned over on his face and was blowing a little hollow in the sand between his elbows.

"Perhaps I can make a sand dune," he said, puffing out his cheeks for another blow.

She reached over and tweaked the padded roll of his broadcloth sleeve, turned back above the elbow. Why did the closing of his hand on hers, before she had time to pull it away, make her want to cry out as if he had hurt her? She was being foolish again. Even if he were going away tomorrow he said he would be back the next summer, and the summer after. But could one ever be sure that people would come back? Tides and fogs, yes. But even they varied so that one mist was never just like another. While as for people — . He would change, she knew he would, and even she herself could not stay the same. Next summer when they climbed Sleeping Bear sand dune again they would be looking for their friendship of the summer before among the shifting sands with which the wind had covered it. One time she had lost the key to the boathouse on the beach, and the next year a child, digging pools for the water to rise in, had turned it up by chance. But it was all rusty and wouldn't fit the door. That was the way it would be with her and Gene, even if they should happen to find their buried love among the moving dunes. For even dunes moved. The man at the Point Betsy life-saving station had said that Sleeping Bear itself shifted several feet from one summer to the next.

If she only had some way to hold him, she thought. But she knew it would not be his fault if he forgot her. He

wouldn't mean to, but the excitement of his new life would crowd out the memories of the old. She often felt his remoteness even when he was close beside her. A new face, an idea, would catch him up like a shell swept onward by the waves, and he would be carried far, far out to sea, leaving her stranded on the dry sand where no waves ever reached. He was like that, gusty as the wind, and as hard to follow. One might as well try to imprison the sea behind a wall of sand as think to keep him near one.

She wished she could be like that, too; living for the moment, and going on to the next with no regret for what must be left behind. She felt, when he talked about next year and his plans for writing a novel, that half of him had already left and was living in the future he anticipated. She had no claim upon him, she knew, and yet it hurt to have him dreaming out those days in Florence, when the wistaria would be in bloom and the bells of Giotto's tower ringing across the valley. Won't you ever think of me? — of this summer? — of this moment, of our lying here on the sun-baked sand with the wind hissing through the knife grass? she cried in silence. Yes, he might think about it, and wonder what she was doing; and then he would go and lean out of his window to smile at the little Italian picking flowers in the garden down below.

Gene rolled over onto his back and squinted up at the sky.  
"What about going on to the bluff?"

She had been dreading that question, for she knew it must come. One can't stay lying on the sand forever. One must go on and sight the ocean and scramble down the bank; go home and say goodnight; and the next day — he would leave.

No, even if he did come back next summer, which she rather doubted anyway, he would be half a stranger: the Gene who was pulling her roughly to her feet now plus all the impressions, the events, the people, that would have entered his life while he was away. And she wouldn't have

been able to live shut up in a case, either. She would be worn smoother by the water in some places, like shell, and filled with sand in others. And all these changes would go on when neither one could know about the other.

"Come on, old girl." He put his arm lightly across her shoulders, and tickled the back of her neck with a stalk of grass.

"I hate to leave," she whispered, "because,—we may never come back."

His arm tightened, and she took refuge against him; just as if she thought, one could ward off the parting or deny its inevitability with a kiss.

They were starting on, toward the sea, but as yet there was no glimpse of it between the dunes; only sweeps of sand laid bare to the hot sun. Each little hillock looked so near, but one must drag up and down, up and down, with the tall grass cutting around one's ankles, and the sand sinking below one's feet at every step. It was almost as hard as walking through water; it held one back, as if it, too, wanted the first glimpse of ocean to be as far away as possible. Their footsteps, as they turned and looked back, made a wavering path across the barren stretch.

"It looks as if a team of camels had passed across the desert," he said.

It *did* look like a desert. One would never dream that the ocean was so near and that there were cottages just beyond on the shore. She could hear the gulls screaming already; not the plaintive skirl that they gave at dawn when the murmur of the sea was deadened by night fog, but a harsh cry, bright and hard as the glare of the sun on the white, white sand.

"There, I see it!" shouted Gene from the next mound, and he reached down a hand to pull her up beside him. Yes, there it was, a splash of vivid blue far below them, with white-lipped waves mouthing at the cliffs. A moist wind, tangy with salt and seaweed, and chill with the breath of the

farthest line of breakers, whipped her skirt about her legs and ran an icy finger down her back.

"There's a ship," he shouted in her ear.

The walk was over, she told herself, tracing the smudge at the horizon; and he was starting on ahead, down the bluff of loose sand to the beach, and the row of cottages peering around the point. She took a long breath, till it seemed as if she had swallowed the salt-flavored wind. Then, noticing that he had looked around for her to follow, she heard her own voice, from miles away it seemed, shouting to him.

"Wait a minute. I'm coming."

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## MILL SOUNDS

By GEORGE C. JOHNSON

Someone called from the mill at half past five. Through a long, low hum I heard him say, "The roll boss talking —" Jim used to tell how the wheels and rollers buzzed around when the red-hot copper went into the rolls; how it clattered and clacked on the iron floor like a snake in a cloud of smoke; but only the hot-roll gang could hear the clack-clack-clack over the engine roar. And he used to joke about the way he skipped away from the slashing tail as it whipped away over the watered floor. I heard all this in the humming noise on the telephone, and through it I could hardly hear the hot-roll boss. He seemed to scream at me, but I had to ask him to say it over twice. Jim, *he* would say you couldn't even yell and expect to be heard in that pot-hole hell. He'd make me laugh to hear him tell how your tongue was useless, and your talking had to be all hands and feet in signs that only the hot-roll gang could understand. Even the clank of hob-nail boots was dead on the floor deep down under skylights and poisoned smoke. Jim used to wear all leather in the hot-roll gang, but even so at night he'd salve his hands and legs where the sizzling copper burned right through the cowhide gloves and apron-guard. I remember

once he called me on the same mill phone. "We work tonight overtime; let supper go," he said. And now last night the boss called up at half past five. I could hardly hear in all the noise. "What's that?" I said. "I can't hear." And all at once the noises somehow seemed to die out. I thought he said: "Jim . . . he's hurt . . . on the rolling floor . . ." But quick, like a screeching cat, some engine whistle cut us off. I hung the receiver on the hook; went back to my dishes and washed the spoons and cups and plates. There was booming and rumbling inside my head and steam in my nose. Then I saw him — Jim — on the iron floor, all smoke and blood with a red-hot snake wrapped hard around his hob-nail boots. I sat by the window and waited for six, but Jim and the noise stood up in my head. And once I saw him tearing away at a slashing tail, and the heel of his boot went clank on the floor.

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## I'VE BEEN READING —

By FRANK LUTHER MOTT

Surely one of the pleasantest books on the winter lists is the Viking Press's collected edition of the *Short Stories of Saki* (\$3.00). It is not necessary to explain Munro to MIDLAND readers at this late date, I am sure, or to expatiate upon his charm. Perhaps his death in the war had something to do with the enthusiasm of critics over his work a few years ago, but his reputation has outlasted that temporary renown and now bids fair to become permanent.

Against the repeated comparison of Saki with O. Henry, however, I am moved solemnly to protest. Christopher Morley appears to have started the idea, and all the New York clique has taken it up; but it does not stand examination. It is true, of course, that both Saki and O. Henry wrote the short short story, and both of them worked regularly for papers; but the similarity goes little further. Saki occasionally played with the surprise ending, but he did not make it characteristic of his work as O. Henry did. The two writers are as far apart as the poles in style, in sympathies, and in social milieu. Saki has stylistic subtleties of which the American writer never dreamed. Saki's humor is commonly very quiet: it reminds more of Meredith than O. Henry. It sometimes has, moreover, a certain sadistic quality that is miles away from O. Henry; if one must have a comparison it is more likely to be found in Bierce. But

the greatest difference between the two authors is in social position and sympathies. O. Henry aligns himself with the proletariat, Saki with the upper middle class and the aristocracy. Society patter is the very essence of Saki: he satirizes it, as he satirizes nearly everything, but he uses it continually. In reading his earlier sketches, I find myself reminded continually of Anthony Hope's outmoded *Dolly Dialogues*.

It is in the stories with a touch of strangeness (again something quite foreign to O. Henry) that I find Saki's best work. "The Open Door," for example, is a little masterpiece. I cannot recommend this new Saki volume too highly to readers of THE MIDLAND.

#### MORE GARLAND AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Hamlin Garland probably began in his cradle to lisp reminiscences. At any rate, nearly all his writings, from the earliest to this last, have the thread of autobiography running through them. Those first and best short stories of life in northeastern Iowa and southwestern Wisconsin were reminiscences of his own life and that of his neighbors, and they were soon followed with *Boy Life on the Prairie* and other books more frankly autobiographical. The Middle Border series, which have brought Mr. Garland a second fame in his old age, have drawn the thread of his own story through a surprisingly large number of volumes. The only exception is the group of novels with settings in the Rocky Mountain country; they were, indeed, suggested by visits to the region they celebrate, but they are apart from the author's own experience. By the same token, they are less valid and important.

The thread gets a bit thin these days, and this last volume contains no little repetition; but to one who likes autobiography and reminiscence as well as I do, there is much pleasure to be found in *Roadside Meetings* (Macmillan, \$3.50). The book has its faults—chiefly of carelessness and loose arrangement. Mr. Garland never was a stylist. But if you like unpretentious little anecdotes of literary, theatrical, and journalistic personages in America and England, you will enjoy this book.

#### LYDIA H. SIGOURNEY

Mrs. Sigourney was once a very important literary figure in the United States. One is likely to wonder how she could have attained such a position when one reads her mediocre and banal verse; and this question is adequately answered in Dr. Gordon Haight's *Mrs. Sigourney, the Sweet Singer of Hartford* (Yale University Press, \$3.00). The lady was extremely industrious, and had a genius for getting her work favorably noticed by the critics; moreover, her sentimental and innocuous verse fitted well with the taste of her times.

Dr. Haight should have known better than to quote Mr. Meade Minnegerode's statement anent "the habitually unremunerated prose and verse" of *Godey's* in the forties: Godey and Graham were the best magazine paymasters the world had yet seen in the forties, and he paid Mrs. Sigourney quite well enough. Also I think Dr. Haight should have made more copious use of Mrs. Sigourney's *Letters of Life*: I do not find anywhere in the volume under review that extraordinary statement of hers that before she ceased to keep a record she had noted the appearance of two thousand contributions of hers to some three hundred journals. Moreover, the tone of Dr. Haight's book seems to me a bit too patronizing: the historical point of view should show us Mrs. Sigourney's very real importance. Yet this study is valuable, as well as readable.

#### OUR TIMES: VOLUME III

The third installment of Mark Sullivan's *Our Times* is called *Pre-War America* (Scribner, \$5.00) and deals with the years 1906, 1907, and 1908. These were the years of Roosevelt, Taft, and Hughes; of the insurance investigations, of muckraking, and of "Teddy's" fight for railroad regulation.

Readers of Mr. Sullivan's earlier volumes know what to expect. Seldom has any historical work been more fascinatingly handled or better calculated to attract and hold the average reader than this. The abundance of well chosen illustration, the large print, and — better than all — the striking talent which Mr. Sullivan possesses of vivid writing make these three volumes, as they will make their successors, excellent reading and valuable contemporary history. The journalistic instinct for the picturesque is united in Mr. Sullivan with a certain philosophical point of view, and the combination is very pleasing.

Here, as in the former volumes, we find due attention to matters which historians have too frequently neglected but which do reflect the social status of the times — dress, popular songs, fads, manners, sports, popular enthusiasms. There may be some prejudice in these chapters, but it is apparent that the author has really endeavored to guard against unfairness. Future historians, writing with more perspective but without any opportunity for first-hand observation and contacts, will bless the name of Mark Sullivan.

#### COMIC MURDER

Corey Ford's newest parody is *The John Riddell Murder Case* (Scribner, \$2.00). It burlesques S. S. Van Dine, but it finds opportunity also to travesty Jim Tully, Will Rogers, Sherwood Anderson, and many others of the great and near-great who are suspected of murdering John Riddell by boring him to death. Anyone who cannot get a laugh out of all this is in a bad way.

Mr. Ford is a bit too hard on Will Rogers. There ought to be a law against humorists satirizing one another. It used to be that

they all felt they were enlisted in a common cause, and when they laughed at one another their quips had a complimentary sound. Someway, there is a bit too much sharpness in this one chapter. But ought a reviewer to be serious in writing of a book like this?

Detective story fans — and ain't we all? — will like this book, with its hundreds of suspects successively slaughtered. Corey Ford is a treasure.

#### JAY SIGMUND

Jay Sigmund is a fine figure in middle western literature. His honest, unpretentious work, done obviously for the sheer joy of giving form to characters and phases of life that he knows intimately, has the respect and admiration of an audience which, though not large, is well worth pleasing. *MIDLAND* readers generally are of that audience, and they will be glad to know of Mr. Sigmund's new volume — *The Ridge Road* (Prairie Publishing Company, Cedar Rapids, \$2.50), which contains six short stories and fifteen poems, all dealing with the folk of the Wapsipinicon country whom Mr. Sigmund knows and loves. The book is beautifully printed and bound.

#### BENJAMIN ROSENBAUM

The third Maizeland Press book is a group of poems by Benjamin Rosenbaum called *Green Nakedness* (\$2.50). It is perhaps the handsomest of the series thus far — grateful to the hand and to the eye. I am sorry that I cannot wax enthusiastic over Mr. Rosenbaum's verses, though he occasionally achieves felicities which surprise one by their effectiveness. Perhaps as good as any poem in the book is this one on Whitman:

He is here in this twilight plain  
Stirring at the edge near the beeches.  
How erect he is for a grey man!  
His beard is touching the ground.  
He is so tremendous  
One would not think he loved the brown bird and the lilacs so much.  
He is taller than a hill.  
And his black cloak flapping about him  
Is like the smoke of a huge bonfire seen from a distant cliff.

#### AND ANOTHER BOOK ON WHITMAN

Time does odd things to literary reputations. Here is a little book "copyrighted by the President and Fellows of Harvard College" extolling a man who was once thought a vile and lewd fellow by nearly everybody in Cambridge. It is an interesting bit of Whitmaniana, made up in part of a biographical essay originally written for Italian consumption, and in part of some personal recollections which the author has treasured from Camden days. It is called *Walt Whitman: A Brief Biography with Reminiscences* and is published by the Harvard University Press (\$1.50).

## BIOGRAPHICAL

G. J. NEUMANN is a teacher of English at Wartburg College, Clinton, Iowa. His lyrics have appeared in earlier issues of THE MIDLAND.

HAROLD CROGHAN is the author of several short stories which have appeared in THE MIDLAND. He teaches Spanish at Lane Technical High School, Chicago.

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ROBERT GATES is a graduate student at Coe College, Cedar Rapids, Iowa. His work is well known to readers of THE MIDLAND.

GLENN WARD DRESBACH has also been a frequent contributor to THE MIDLAND, as well as to many other magazines. He is the author of a number of volumes of poems. His home is in Chicago.

GRACE STONE COATES has been a frequent contributor to THE MIDLAND, and is an associate editor of *The Frontier*, that admirable magazine published in her home state of Montana. The story in this issue of THE MIDLAND is a part of her novel *Black Cherries*, which will be published in February by Alfred A. Knopf.

BELLE TURNBULL is a Colorado writer who has contributed to various poetry magazines.

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CYRIL JOHN CLARKE is a young Chicago writer. "Depression" is his first published story.

FLORA J. ARNSTEIN lives in California and has contributed to the poetry magazines.

MOE BRAGIN is a young Brooklyn writer. Poems by Mr. Bragin have appeared in earlier issues of THE MIDLAND and in *Poetry*, but "Cake" is his first published story.

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